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THE SEVEN NIGHTS OF CREATION.

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THE WRITINGS IN PROSE AND VERSE OF

RUDYARD KIPLING

EARLY VERSE

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1900

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SCHOOL-BOY LYRICS

1879–1882

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Lo! as a little child
Looks from its window on a mighty town,
And sees the roofs as far as eye can reach,
But thinks not, knows not — nay, will not believe —
That there are Fathers, Mothers, Sisters, Homes
All like his own, a thousand homely talks,
Manners, and customs — so I saw the world
With millions of my brethren. Then I wrote;
And all my verse sprang fire-new from a brain
That loved it and believed it. But the world
Coldly, in silence, passed my numbers by.
Therefore I sang in fury! When the years
Brought with them coolness, all too late I found
There were ten thousand, thousand thoughts like mine!

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THE DUSKY CREW

OUR heads were rough and our hands were black
With the ink-stain's midnight hue;
We scouted all, both great and small—
We were a dusky crew;
And each boy's hand was against us raised—
'Gainst me and the Other Two.

We chased the hare from her secret lair,
We roamed the woodlands through;
In parks and grounds far out of bounds
Wandered our dusky crew;
And the keepers swore to see us pass—
Me and the Other Two.

And one there was who was light of limb,
Nimble and wary too.
A spirit grim we made of him
Unto our dusky crew:
He fetched and carried for all us three—
For me and the Other Two.

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THE DUSKY CREW

Our secret caves in the cold, dark earth
  The luscious lettuce grew;
We ate the cress in merriness—
  We were a dusky crew;
The radish red gave sweet repast
  To me and the Other Two.

Our lettuces are dead and gone,
  Our plans have fallen through;
We wander free in misery—
  We are a wretched crew:
For a master's wrath has fallen on us—
  On me and the Other Two.

He found our cave in the cold, dark earth,
  He crept the branches through;
He caught us all in our Council-Hall—
  Caught us, a dusky crew;
To punishment he led us all—
  Me and the Other Two.

Our lettuces are dead and gone,
  Our plans have fallen through;
We wander free in misery—
  We are a wretched crew.
Will happiness no more return
  To me and the Other Two?

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TWO SIDES OF THE MEDAL

"I WILL into the world, I will make me a name,
I will fight for truth, I will fight for fame,
I will win pure love, and when I die
The world shall praise me, worthily."

He entered the world—he fought for fame;
They twined him the thorny wreath of shame.
I met him once more full suddenly;
His face was seamed with misery.

"Have you fought for truth? have you worked in vain?
Have you gained pure love without a stain?
Is your name yet great? Will it ever be?
Are you praised of all men, worthily?"

He did not answer—he did not speak,
But waited awhile with a reddened cheek,
Then, trembling, faltering, and looking down—
Good heavens, he asked me for half a crown!

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THIS SIDE THE STYX

NAKED and shivering, how the oozy tide
Affrights me, waiting! Yonder boatman there
Is dull and moveless as the very stones
That fringe the infernal river. Woe is me!
All that I had, departed, and this state
Of aimless wandering on the farther shore
Is scarcely better than the life of forms
I see around me. Huge, deformèd toads,
Yellow and dripping monsters, loathsome plants
Dropping their blotched leaves in the reeking slime.
This is the land of Death in very truth.
The imprisoned air bears not my trembling voice
To shapes, my comrades in the upper life,
To those that sate and laughed with me of old,
Alas, how altered! Tullius Quæstor there
Stands solitary, he that lovèd mirth,
And drank the unmixed wine till morning came
With me, how often! Is that Poetus,
Mine ancient enemy? O Gods! he comes
Beating the dead air with his outstretched palms
In silent supplication. Now his mouth
Is shaping words, and yet there comes no sound;

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And now he passes in the drifting mist,
A shadow amid shadows. I alone
Retain a lasting form, or seem to do.
Claudius Herminius, once a trusty friend,
Is fleeting like the others. Is there none
To stay and give me peace? Ixion now
Had eased me, for he beareth greater pain;
But all alone upon these crumbling banks,
False as the world I left, how shall I be,
Or rather cease from being? Could I lose
My soul, sensation, all that makes me, I,
Oblivion were thrice blessèd. Lo! the boat
Is moving toward me—now at least is change.
Slowly, oh! slowly parts the stagnant flood,
And slow as is repentance, Charon rows!

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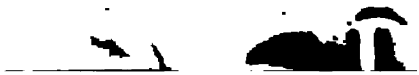
READING THE WILL

HERE we have it, scratched and scored
By the tides of an impotent human soul;
He that wrote it died abhorred,
And scarcely the bell had ceased to toll
Ere they crowded together over the cake,
Ferret-eyed women and keen-faced men,
In the putrid well of his life to slake
Their viperous throats, and wonder when
The lawyer was coming to give their share—
Waiting like beasts behind the bars
For the meat apportioned,—and all the air
Thick with the hissing whisper that mars
Fame of the living and fame of the dead.
See that woman, her yellow teeth
Pressing the lip's thin line of red;
Mark the struggle that lies beneath
The outer surface of weepers and veils!
She was his housekeeper, people muttered
Hints, half-hinting, and half-heard tales,
Poison tipping each syllable uttered.
Charity, this! And the dead man lies
Still? Impossible! He must stir,



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READING THE WILL

Slip the bandages, turn and rise,
  Speak, refuting the blot on her!
There is no sign. Does he hear them say
  She has it all, and "We know how
She wiled it from him, but let us stay
  To hear the reading—it's coming now"?
Slowly, slowly, the red seals break.
  Watch them, marking his ev'ry word—
How in life he had willed to make
  This one wretched, and that preferred.
"I will and I choose that such an one
  Should have my all!" O woe, O woe!
Human potency, what has it done
  To help men's souls in the shades below?
Does he remember his power past,
  How that he made men smile or weep,—
Helpless to hold his riches fast,
  Fighting with blows men strike in sleep?

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AN ECHO

LET the fruit ripen one by one
On the sunny wall;
If it fall
Who is it suffers? What harm is done?
None at all.

An Eve in the garden am I;
Behold, this one
In the sun
Falls with a touch, and I let it lie,
My first one.

One fresh from the bough; I break it;
The red juice flies
Into my eyes.
Shall I swallow, leave, or take it,
Or despise?

Sweet to my taste was that second
And I hold it meet
That I eat;
But ah me! Are the bruised ones reckoned
At my feet?

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CARET

SOMETHING wanting in this world—
  What is it? To each and all
Different desires come,
  Tides of longing rise and fall.

Hopes of youth still unfulfilled,
  Homes that have an empty chair,
Gulfs that gape and pits that balk;
  Something wanting everywhere.

Can we fill the gap with love,
  Forge the missing link with gold?
Let the heart be ne'er so warm,
  Still one portion blank and cold.

Broken chords are but our share;
  Harmony with discord blends;
Fate's dull web but coarsest cloth,
  Patched with finer odds and ends.

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ROSES

ROSES by babies' rosier fingers pressed
In wondering amazement. Later, youth,
Attired in knickerbockers, flings them by
Contemptuously. Lovers' offerings then,
Much kissed and withered. Staid and sober age
In snug, suburban villas rears them last:
The world at large is dowered with their thorns!

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THE LESSON

WE two learned the lesson together,
  The oldest of all, yet so new
To myself, and I'm wondering whether
  It was utterly novel to you?

The pages—you seemed to have known them,
  The pictures that changed 'neath our eyes;
Alas! by what hand were you shown them,
  That I find you so womanly wise?

Is it strange that my hand on your shoulder
  In the dusk of the day should be placed?
Did you say to yourself, "Were he older
  His arm had encircled my waist?"

If it be so, so be it, fair teacher;
  I sit at your feet and am wise,
For each page of the book is a feature,
  And the light of the reading, your eyes.

We have met, and the meeting is over;
  We must part, and the parting is now;
We have played out the game—I, boy-lover,
  In earnest, and you, dearest, how?

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THE SONG OF THE SUFFERER

Written when ill with fever and sore throat.

His drink it is Saline Pyretic,
He longs, but he shall not eat,
His soul is convulsed with emetic,
His stomach is empty of meat.

His bowels are stirred by blind motions,
His form in the flannel is bound,
He has gargles, and powders, and potions,
And walks as not feeling the ground.

For the doctor has harrowed his being,
And of medicine wondrous the might is;
He suffers in agony, seeing
He is prey to acute tonsilitis.

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THE FRONT DOOR

I STAND and guard—such ones as say
  In matter lives no spirit, lie;
The household through me throbs and beats,
The meaning of the crowded streets
  Is plain, and once a year I may
Admit the beings of the sky.

Lost souls revisiting the earth
  To see old loves that they be well,
And find their hold upon the heart,
In life so strong, in death depart;
  Wherefore with peals of soundless mirth
Goes each one to his place in hell.

The curtain on a winter's night
  Struggles and beats as if it fought
In every fold a power of air;
The unseen fills each vacant chair;
  The living lavish not a thought
On those that are not in their sight.

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THE FRONT DOOR

Life and dark death go hand in hand,—
    Believe or disbelieve my tale,—
How Death is Life, how Life is Death,
How that the spirit wandereth,
    How bolts and bars may not prevail
To guard us from the Other Land.

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ARGUMENT OF A PROJECTED POEM TO BE CALLED "THE SEVEN NIGHTS OF CREATION"

The Devil each night of the seven days of Creation works in emulation of the Creator and produces baneful things—fogs, poisonous plants, venomous creatures, etc.—and at last tries to make a man in imitation of Adam. He fails, recognises his failure, and is obliged to own that his power cannot rival that of the Creator, and that evil is less powerful than good.

Lo! what is this I make! Are these his limbs,
Bent inward, tottering 'neath the body's weight?
The body crutched by hairy spider-arms,
Surmounted by a face as who should say,
Why hast thou made me? wherefore hast thou
breathed
Spirit in this foul body? Let me be!
The piteous visage puckers with its woe,
The strange black lips are working with a cry—
A cry and protest. Lo! the wrinkled palms
Are stretched forth helplessly and beat the dark.
So did not my great foe when he was made.
I saw his eye glow with the sense of power,
I saw all wild things crouch beneath that eye;

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ARGUMENT OF A PROJECTED POEM

God gave him great dominion over all
And blessed him. Shall I bless my handiwork?
After thy kind be fruitful, lust, and eat;
All things I give thee in the earth and air—
Only depart and hide thee in the trees.
He rises from the ground to do my will
And seek a shelter. Can the being speak?
Stay, thing, and thank me for thy quickening.
The great eyes roll—my meaning is not there
Reflected as God's word was in the man's.
I, maker, bid thee speak, if speak thou canst!
Lo! what is this? My labour is in vain.
He plucks the grass-tufts aimlessly, and works
Palm within palm, then for a moment's space
Breaks off rough bark and throws it on the ground.
He hears me not. Oh! would the dawn delay,
So I might rise and perfect that I make,
Or rise and build again. Alas! the light
Is flaming forth to mock me. See, he sits
Helpless, uprooting grass. While all the world
Is thick with life renewed that fills my ears,
My last and greatest work is mockery.
Depart, O Ape! Depart and leave me foiled.

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CONVENTIONALITY

PASSION and Fire—bah! are they ever linked with
beauty?
Beauty and fairness of face? The devils below can
tell
The upper-world folk, if they will,
How it's not the lovely alone that enter the gates of
hell.

Heroes and dames of fiction, so wicked, so fair, so
accurst,
How we praise their faults and applaud each clap-
trap speech on the stage!
But red hands may be raised to kill—
The white-mouse eye can sparkle as well as the
eagle's with rage.

I knew two people so. Romance! She was nothing
at all—
Weak-mouthed and chalky-white, limping, and stut-
tering too.
He was as dull as ever lead,
Dumb; and we wondered how he had found him
words to woo.

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CONVENTIONALITY

Then—God knows how it happened!—there came
the crime, and we saw
The two, how they held together through the trial
and all the rest
Of the dragging chain of the law;
But alas for Romance! we cut them as though they
had been the pest.

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"DONEC GRATUS ERAM"

(DEVONSHIRE DIALECT)

He

So long as 'twuz me alone
An' there wasn't no other chaps,
I was praoud as a King on 'is throne—
Happier tu, per'aps.

She

So long as 'twuz only I
An' there wasn't no other she
Yeou cared for so much—sure*ly*
I was glad as glad could be.

He

But now I'm in lovv with Jane Pritt—
She can play the piano, she can;
An' if dyin' 'u'd 'elp 'er a bit
I'd die laike a man.

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"DONEC GRATUS ERAM"

She

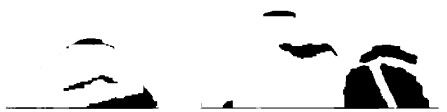
Yeou'm like me. I'm in lovv with young Frye—
  Him as lives out tu Appledore Quay;
An' if dyin' u'd 'elp 'im I'd die—
  Twice ovver for he.

He

But 'sposin' I threwed up Jane
  An' niver went walkin' with she—
And come back to you again—
  How 'u'd that be?

She

Frye's sober. Yeou've allus done badly—
  An' yeou shifts like cut net-floats, yeou du:
But—I'd throw that young Frye ovver gladly
  An' lovv 'ee right thru!



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THE BOAR OF THE YEAR

IN the shade of the trees by the lunch-tent the old
Haileyburian sat,—
A full fourteen-stone in the saddle, and the best of
hard riders at that,—
And he shouted aloud as we passed him: "I'll wait
till the claret-cup cools.
There's a sounder broke loose in the open! Ride,
boys, for the love of your Schools!"

Bull-huge in the mists of the morn at the head of his
sounder he stood—
Our quarry—and watched us awhile, and we thirsted
aloud for his blood;
Then over the brawn of his shoulder looked back as
we galloped more near—
Then fled for the far-away cover; and we followed
the Boar of the Year!

There was Cheltenham perched on an Arab—so rich
are these thrice-born R.E.'s;
And Rugby—his mount was a Waler; and a couple
of O.U.S.C.'s;

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And the rest of the field followed after. They were old and wiser, perhaps—
For we flew over tats at the nullahs,[1] but they scrambled through by the gaps.

Away like a bird went the Arab—head and tail in the air, which is wrong:
For a pig-sticker worthy his salt looks down as he gallops along;
And the Arab was new to the business. What wonder that Cheltenham fell
In the grip of a buffalo-wallow, and sat down to rest him a spell?
Then Rugby shot forward the first of us three, for to reason it stands
That a coachy Artillery charger has the legs of a mere fourteen-hands.

But he jinked, and the Waler went wide; but the country-breds wheeled and we flew
O'er the treacherous black-cotton furrows—spears up, riding all that we knew.
Now, a beast with a mouth like a brickbat can't turn to a turn of the wrist—
And the Waler took furlongs to turn in; and the rest of the run Rugby missed.
So we shed him and spread him and left him, after manifold jinkings and chouses,
And the issue was narrowed to this: "Ride, boys, for the love of your Houses!"

[1] Ravines.

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THE BOAR OF THE YEAR

Dull-white on the slate of his hide ran a spear-scar
from shoulder to chine:
And a pig that is marked by the spear is seldom
the sweetest of swine.
When he stopped in the shade of the *reh*-grass that
fringes the river-bed's marge,
The lift of his rust-red back-bristles had warned us:
Look out for the charge!

And we got it! Right wheel, best foot foremost—
with a quick sickle-sweep of the head
That missed the off-hock of my pony and tore
through a tussock instead,
He made for the next horse's belly—the jungle-
pig's deadliest trick—
And he caught the spear full in the shoulder, and the
bamboo broke short at the nick:
Then the prettiest mare in the Province let out with
her ever-quick heels,
And the sound of the Ancient his death-grunt was
drowned in her feminine squeals!

And which of the Houses got first-spear? With sor-
row unfeigned be it said,
I jabbed at his quarters and missed, and—I rode for
the Black and the Red;
And he for the Black and the Yellow, and his was the
first and last spear
That ended the hunt by the river, and won you the
Boar of the Year.

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THE BOAR OF THE YEAR

So we drank in the shade of the lunch-tent to the
Barrack that stands by the Sea—
We drank to the health of its fellows—to all who
have been and may be.
And Cheltenham joined in the chorus and Rugby re-
echoed the cheer
On the day that we rode for the College, and won
you the Boar of the Year!

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THE BATTLE OF ASSYE

(From the United Services College "Chronicle," July 2, 1886.)

Save where our huge sea-castles from afar,
Beat down, in scorn, some weak Egyptian wall,
We are too slothful to give heed to war.

As a gorged Lion will not stir at all,
Although the hunter mock him openly,
So we are moveless when the trumpets call.

A soldier's letter, written long ago
(The ink lies yellow on the tattered page),
Telling of war, with rugged overflow
Of epithet, and bursts of uncouth rage;
And as I find the letter—so I write
My record of brave deeds in a dead age.

"The man was a man you could follow to death,
And dying, thank with your latest breath
For the honour granted—and he had led
From the sea to the scorching plains inland,
Where the soil would flay the skin from your hand
If you let it rest for a moment there;
And the sun at noonday strikes you dead,
And the breeze is a blast of furnace air;

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THE BATTLE OF ASSYE

Where the Jungle stands in an inland sea,
When the hills send down their floods to the plain,
And the waters drown the coiled tree-snake,
And the reed-thatched hamlets by *jhîl* and lake
Are swamped and demolished utterly.

"How can I tell of the months of fight?—
The whole thing slid like an evil dream,
With the same tired halt at camping-time,
When the hot day sank into hotter night,
A broken sleep and a dream of home;
Then grain for each lowing bullock-team;
And then the sun in the parched blue dome—
The dusty march like an endless rhyme,
And the weary, broken sleep again.

"But one thing stays in my mind, and will stay
Stamped in fire till the day I die:—
How the wild Mahratta ranks gave way
From a poor four thousand of Englishmen,
By the little village they call Assye—
For we were one where they numbered ten;
How we fought through the hot September day
In the face of their cannon, and how we slew;
How the horsemen galloped down on us,
And we broke their ranks and fought anew,
In the midst of a fire so murderous
That it seems a wonder that I am alive;
And, last of all, how we chased the crew,
Drove them like bullocks our peasants drive,
Footsore and bleeding. It happened thus:

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THE BATTLE OF ASSYE

"Three armies were met together to crush
The whole of our little force—and we
(Thanks to the tale of a lying scout)
Had come on their camp so suddenly,
Where the Kaitua River curves about
In the steep clay reaches of Bokerdun,
That we knew we must either fight or die,
Since no succour could come by land or sea,
And we knew that retreat was worse than defeat;
And we thought this over, there in the bush,
As we faced their masses of cavalry,
And counted each point-blank, grinning gun,
While the turbid river rolled between;
And far away from the plains' burnt green
The still ghats watched us against the sky.

"We found a ford, and the word was given,
And over we went as glad as might be—
Seeing, for months past, we had striven
With a foe who fled like a dusky cloud,
And we thirsted to meet them in open field,
With no quarter asked or grace allowed,
And fight till one of us two should yield.
So, a splash through the stream with arms held high,
A rattle of stones when the horses passed,
And we found ourselves on the farther side,
And we only feared lest the foe should fly—
Cheating us out of our fight at the last.
For we saw their ranks fall back and divide,
And we watched their faces horrified
That our handful should dare to strive with them.

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And then the view was hid from us wholly—
Like a fleecy fringe on a garment's hem,
The whole of the front of their line outbroke
In a dense, white bank of blinding smoke,
That rose against the blue sky slowly,
While the red death flickered in spirts of fire
As each cannon opened its lips and spoke
A deep-mouthed warning to bid us retire.

"On the left the Kaitua hemmed us in,
On the right a rushing watercourse;
In front their masses of infantry,
Their surging waves of Mahratta horse,
Came down on us like a winter sea;
And we fought as they fight who fight for life—
Each one as though the army's fate
Hung on the strength of his own right wrist
When he warded away the cold curved knife,
And the wiry devil that wielded it
Recoiled from the bayonet—just too late—
And the steel came out with a wrench and a twist.
So we fought and slew in the midst of the din
Till their line was broken—till man and horse
Fled over the rushing watercourse,
And the greatest fight of the world was our own!
And now my face is scarred to the bone,
And I'm lame maybe from a musket-ball—
Yet I thank God always (and ever shall)
That I fought in a fight the world will applaud;
For the new generations by and bye

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Shall be proud of that long September day,
When ten men fled from the face of one,
And the river ran red in its seaward way,
As it flowed through the village of Bokerdun—
Red with the blood that was spilt at Assye! "

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ON FORT-DUTY

(March 28, 1884.)

THERE'S tumult in the Khyber,
There's feud at Ali Kheyl;
For the *Maliks*[1] of the Khyber
Are at it tooth and nail—
With the stolen British carbine
And the long Kohat *jezail*.[2]

And I look across the ramparts
To the northward and the snow—
To the far Cherat cantonments;
But alas! I cannot go
From the dusty, dreary ramparts
Where the cannons grin arow!

There's fighting in the Khyber,
But it isn't meant for me,
Who am sent upon "Fort-duty"
By this pestilent Ravi,
With just one other subaltern,
And not a soul to see.

[1] Head-men. [2] Matchlock.

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ON FORT-DUTY

Oh! it's everlasting gun-drill
  And eight-o'clock parades,
It's cleaning-up of mortars
  (Likewise of carronades),
While the passes ring with rifles
  And the noise of Afghan raids.

And I look across the ramparts
  To the river broad and grey,
And I think of merry England
  Where the festive Horse Guards play.
Oh! take the senior grades for this
  And spare the young R.A.!

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INSCRIBED IN A PRESENTATION COPY OF "ECHOES" TO THE COMMON-ROOM

(From the United Services College "Chronicle," March 27, 1889.)

"*My very noble and approved good masters.*"

Placetne, Domini?—in far Lahore
I wait your verdict, 'mid the palms and roses,
Much as I did those judgments writ of yore
Upon my "proses."

Blue-pencil X's when constructions queer
Ran riot down the inky, thumb-marked page;
And wondrous words that moved too oft, I fear,
Your righteous rage.

Red-pencil marks when half a dozen rules,
Smashed at one stroke, broke down your patience, too,
And left me, in the silence of the Schools,
With "lines to do."

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INSCRIBED IN "ECHOES"

These were your judgments—well deserved
enough
By one who daily scorned his Latin Primer.
What is your verdict on the latest stuff
Sent by this rhymer?

Placetne, Domini?—'neath India's sky
I wait your answer, laymen and divines;
And, as of old, upon your table I
"Show up my lines."

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THE SONG OF THE EXILES

(From the United Services College "Chronicle," October 15, 1883.)

THAT long white Barrack by the Sea
Stares blankly seaward still,
But other grimy paws make free
With pignuts on "The Hill."

Fresh faces in the Gym appear,
New knives cut other names;
Fresh sinners carry on, I fear,
Our very same old games.

Terms come and go, scenes shift and fade,
The young moustache progresses;
In place of call-over, "parade,"
Instead of dinner, "messes."

By some mysterious law of fate
I cannot understand,
Most College fledgelings gravitate
To "India's coral strand."

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THE SONG OF THE EXILES

In steamy mists of moist Bombay,
  Or dreary Dum-dum "lines,"
Or where Karachi dust-storms play,
  An O.U.S.C. pines.

Some watch the tender tea-plant grow
  In gardens of Cachar;
Some wait at Quetta for the slow
  Sure-coming frontier war.

By Naga Hills our feet are set,
  Or swamps of North Bengal;
Some spend their leave in far Thibet,
  Some get no leave at all.

Some lead the R.A. guns afield
  (At least upon parade),
Some watch lest Kutcha [1] dams may yield
  To rifts the rains have made.

Some write voluminous reports
  On "forest land increase,"
Some work at survey in the Ghats,
  And some in the Police.

Some prance beside their *gorah-log* [2]
  On bony beasts and strange,
Some test, at Murree or Jutogh,
  The flashing signal's range.

[1] Temporary. [2] European soldiers.

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THE SONG OF THE EXILES

A scattered brotherhood, in truth,
By mount, and stream, and sea,
We chase, with all the zeal of youth,
Her Majesty's Rupee.

Exiles are we—yet, through our dreams
Old scenes and faces glide,
So that the city's murmur seems
The voice of Northam tide.

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ENVY, HATRED, AND MALICE

LET us praise Such an One,
  Give him commendation
Sincere for labour done—
  As honour to the nation.
  Such elevation,
Such perfect taste, was never known before;
Our ranks admit one poet more,
  'Mid universal acclamation.

Such an One is elevated
  To the gods,
  Even to the demi-gods.
Such an One is crownèd king,
  Self and friends
Chew the cud of bitter feeling
    Wondering
  By what ends
These strange vermin come to stealing
  Bay-leaves here and there to make
Forged false wreaths, for sure 'tis odd
  How the world a man may take
    For a god.
    (Even for a demi-god!)

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Such an One is gone—there rises
  Such Another:
With old thoughts in newer guise
  Born to smother
Such an One's productions.
Welcomed is he just as loudly,
Trails his mantle just as proudly.
    Whence I draw
    My deductions
That many and many a poet more,
  Ere I lie beneath the sods,
I shall witness swell and soar
  To the gods,
  Even to the demi-gods!

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A LEGEND OF DEVONSHIRE

THERE were three daughters long ago,
In a lonely house that faced the sea;
They sent their father forth to plough
The narrow meadow that skirts the sea.

The autumn fogs are drifting by,
The old man's wits are dull and numb;
He has opened the barn where the young colts lie
Safe from the biting frosts to come.

He has taken the plough-gear and harnessed three
Hot young bloods that no lash will bear;
The rain is falling — he cannot see
If young or old be harnessed there.

He is ploughing the meadow that skirts the sea—
Old hands a-quivering with the cold;
The furrows are running crookedly,
And the share is clogged with the clinging mould.

The crow and daw fly fast to eat
Their food, while afar the sea-gulls scream;
The rain has changed to a stinging sleet;
He is ploughing as one who ploughs in a dream.

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They have swerved from the field; the shingles grate
  Beneath their hooves and the jangling plough;
The day is dying, the hour is late:
  But the salt sea-foam is light to plough.

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ILLUSION, DISILLUSION, ALLUSION

I

FAIREST of women is she.
In all the passion of youth,
In deed and in word and in truth;
For time and eternity
I woo her, so let it be.

II

Rouge and wrinkles and puff,
Padding and powder enough
To win a hundred hearts!
They are welcome. From me departs
Love for this woman of arts.

III

Old friend, why discourse of these things?
Fairest of women *was* she.
Somewhere in eternity
We may play out the game again;
Here, Time has ended her reign,
Making her hateful to see.

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OVERHEARD

(SUPPOSED TO BE AFTER BROWNING)

So the day dragged through,
And the afternoon brought the spangles,
  The sawdust smell, the tights,
  The flickering, flashing lights,
    The smile to acknowledge the cheer
As the rider skips and jangles
    The bells. Ye gods! —'twas queer
How the young equestriennes flew.

A programme redished, I lay
  Back in my seat to gaze
On the faces around, to hear what folk say,
While the orchestra rattled and roared,
  Murdering popular lays—
It was hot, too, and I felt bored.

Then a voice from behind, a rustling of dress,
  The step of a man, a silence to settle,
  A babble of children (how they push,
These little ones, making your coat in a mess),
A silence to settle, and after a gush
  Of small talk, I sat and waited,
  Shutting my eyes till the stream abated.
'Twas a tale of trouble, told in a rush.

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OVERHEARD

Who was the speaker? I turned to see—
A sharp little saucy face,
No whit abashed, gazing at me
With bead-eyes, curiously,
With a petulant child's grimace,
As I shifted, moving her feet
From the chair where they 'd taken root,
For the time at least; then again
I listened. Fast and fleet
She poured out the queer little words to her friend—
(A sort of an overgrown brute).
I heard it out to the end—·
A story of pain.
Here you have it, in fine
(Her words, not mine):
"Tried for luck in London—
Voilà tout!
Failed, lost money, undone;
Took to the streets for a life.
Entre nous,
It's a terrible uphill strife,
Like all professions—too filled.
And now I'm in lodgings hard by,
Au quatrième, up in the sky.
Visit me by and by,
They're furnished, but oh—so cold,
So cold!"
There the queer little voice was stilled;
She moved to a further chair
And left me sitting there

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OVERHEARD

To think on the story told—
Not to me, but to her friend—
Of a life that had only one end,
And for burden, "Oh, so cold!"

Have you ever seen on the face
Of a child a sort of despair,
A comical, hopeless air,
When a toy won't work, or a doll won't cry,
Or a cart runs awkwardly?
Well, I saw it there
As she moved to a further chair.
She'd broken some toy she had—
Or, was it a life gone bad?

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THE JAM-POT

(IN THE MANNER OF ROBERT BROWNING)

THE Jam-pot — tender thought!
I grabbed it — so did you.
"What wonder while we fought
Together that it flew
In shivers?" you retort.

You should have loosed your hold
One moment — checked your fist.
But, as it was, too bold
You grappled and you missed.
More plainly — you were sold.

"Well, neither of us shared
The dainty." 'That your plea?
"Well, neither of us cared,"
I answer. . . . Let me see,
How have your trousers fared?

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FROM THE WINGS

We are actors at the side-scenes ere the play of life
begins,
With the curtain rising on us and the tally of our
sins:
You may pace the boards before me while amazed
the boxes sit,
I, with all my rant and thunder, may but hardly stir
the pit.
You may be a prima donna, winning monarchs with
your smile;
What wonder I, your equal, should adore you all the
while?
When you stand before the footlights will you do
your best to shine
In that part the Fates have cast you? Will you join
your part to mine?
Will you mouth your words, or murmur? Will you
take me for a friend,
From the shifting of the first scene till the curtain
brings the end?
When the act-drop falls upon us, when we've heard
the audience cheer,
When the people that have watched us leave the
stalls and gallery clear,

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FROM THE WINGS

When the lights are near extinguished, when the ghostlike cloths are thrown
O'er the purple of the velvet, and the actors stand alone—
Old and wrinkled, grey and toothless, fighting at the other door,
Who shall face the darkness first, and who of them shall go before
To the great unknown that stretches out away there where the lights
Flare and flicker in the darkness of an awful night of nights—
Where French rouge won't cheat the Devil, where pearl-powder never lies,
And the belladonna's useless for wide, terror-stricken eyes?
When they're howling in the pit, here, may I claim you for my own?
Face the journey both together—two are better far than one.
We'll rehearse the farce together for a little, little time,
Turn the prose that is our being to a comedy in rhyme.
You be lord, and I'll be lady, and in sufferance take my hand,
Talk of passion never dying (for the woman, understand).
So, we'll play it at the wings here, mind! I've never sworn to be
Constant in the real acting, only in the mimicry!

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FROM THE WINGS

To your place! Your eyes are wandering! Oh—a girl there in the wings.
(Odd that in rehearsing 'tis my jealousy that stings!)
I've been thinking it were better just for once to play it through,
Much in earnest; shall we try it? As the heaven I am true
(Made of blue with tinsel planets!) Well! your oath is real enough;
I believe you—only kiss me! This forced passion's dreary stuff!

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CREDAT JUDÆUS

First Couple

THREE couples were we in the lane,
Keeping our walks and turning again;
At the point where we meet
The roar of the street
Like the sound of a beast in pain
Comes faintly. Here all is sweet.

Who were the others? I did not see.
Why should I look at the men at all?
Why should their partners interest me?
I'm sure that I loved mine best of all.

Perfect in beauty and grace,
Perfect in figure and face,
She with her eyes divine!
The present for just us two;
Eternity makes her mine,
Our love is eternal and true!

Second Couple

Watch them, dearest, cheek to cheek,
Arm in arm; when years are past
Will their love like our love last,
Still so fond, still cheek to cheek?

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CREDAT JUDÆUS

There is one true love below;
We have found it! Others kiss
For a little, part and miss,
Grieve awhile, then lightly go.

These in earnest! I have seen
Many such; the years will fly,
Leave us loving, you and I,
While they talk of what has been.

Third Couple

I wanted them walks so bad
With you, and missus is mad
'Cos she says I gad out at night;
No doubt but what she's right.
Well, I can't stay long, but see,
Promise to 'old to me,
An' I'll 'old to you for hever!
Them people may court a bit—
They don't love like we two!
O George! I've got no one but you.
'Old by me! Promise it!
And I'll never leave you, never!

I, the writer that made them speak,
Laughed aloud as I passed the three,
Strong in a passion to last a week,
For Love that is real was given to me!

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SOLUS CUM SOLA

WE were alone on the beach,
  Facing the summer sea,
Watching the waves on the beach,
  Watching the moon on the sea.

Words were not many, I ween;
  Why should we want them, we?
Two hearts, and nothing between,
  Facing the summer sea.

Silence! such silence is speech.
  She, with her arm in mine,
Pacing the moonlit beach,
  Makes it communion divine.

Voice of the world around?
  Blatant bands on the pier?
We have not heard a sound,
  And yet you say they were near!

Well, we must go there once more,
  Hear them play, you and I.
Lo! the day's glory is o'er;
  Until to-morrow, good-bye.

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MISSED

THERE is *one* moment when the gods are kind,
And, bending down, pour blessings on our head;
It is the moment when all men are blind,
And Honour perishèd.

There is *one* moment when the fire flies,
God-sent, and flickers; hold it he who may.
It is the moment when on other eyes
Our own are turned away.

There is *one* moment when our Love is loving,
And would repay our worship. Lo! alas!
It is the moment when the blood is moving
Coldly, that these things pass.

There is *one* moment of a high endeavour
That stirs our pulse with passion. Be it so;
'Tis but one moment, and is lost for ever;
Account this, therefore, woe.

There is one moment only that shall make
Men equal. For the rest, we strike and strike
The chords all jarringly; no comfort take.
There are no twain alike.

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REQUIESCAT IN PACE

A NEW-MADE grave, for the damp earth stood
  Yellow and miry there at the lips
Of the pit, where one in her widowhood
  Waited to witness the coffin's eclipse
Under the clods, that tumbled and rolled,
Rattled and thundered o'er clay as cold.

The mother facing the wife—they wept
  As never I yet saw women weep.
Standing behind them, the watch I kept
  Was a watch that never did mortal keep,
For the thing below that had ceased to be,
With human utterance spoke to me.

"There is knocking at my door, there!—Aspirations
  long since fled,
High endeavours of my springtime that have lived
  and perished.
Why disquiet me, O phantoms? Wherefore strive to
  stir the dead?

"Striking on dumb chords, O passion!
  Music comes not. Here below,
I am of another fashion
  Than the 'I' six days ago.

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REQUIESCAT IN PACE

"There is knocking at my door, there!—Hopes that fired younger blood:
Lust of power, lust of knowledge, fierce desire for the good,
For some truth that might uphold me 'gainst the clamour of Doubt's brood.

"Mark ye my closèd mouth well;
Lines where the strong speech would sit
Shadowed ere words;—now all Hell
Stirs not these wrinkles one whit.

"There is knocking at my door, there!—as of one that would not wait,
As of one that wished to tear me from my quiet, kingly state.
'Tis some Love that might have saved me, come, alas! too late, too late.

"Six days since, around my bed,
People spake in accents low;
As a dream half vanishèd
Were their words six days ago—
Spake of something that might save,
Some great power from above,
Power to open up my grave,
And I think they called it Love.
Canst *thou* lift the heavy weight?
Canst thou help me from the gloom?
Human love is less than Fate,
Failing ere it reach the tomb.

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REQUIESCAT IN PACE

" There is knocking at my door, there!—Pity calling
friends to mind,
Telling loud of those that mourned me, certain ones I
left behind.
Surely they may break their shacklings, snap the
fleshly chains that bind.
" Seest thou this hand that would close
Warm o'er the clasp of a friend?
Tell me the tale of his woes—
It shall lie still to the end.

" There is silence, and I slumber in the narrow, narrow
room,
Waiting, waiting, ever waiting, for the judgment and
the doom.
Sweet to wearied limbs this resting, sweet to strainèd
eyes this gloom.
" Cool, and no life to arouse
Passions that slay and destroy.
Love, and its numberless vows,
Life, and its manifold joy—
I have quitted them all and for ever:
Sweep as the tempests at will,
Sure, 'tis an idle endeavour
Seeking to waken the still.
Beat at my door, O sad mother!
Wife! rain thy tears on my breast.
I, that was thine, am made other,
Alien in all; and I rest."

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AVE IMPERATRIX

Written on the occasion of the last attempt on the Queen's life. Printed 1882.

FROM every quarter of Your land
They give God thanks who turned away
Death and the needy madman's hand
Death-fraught which menaced You that day.

One school, of many made to make
Men who shall hold it dearest right
To battle for their ruler's sake,
And stake their being in the fight,

Sends greeting humble and sincere—
Though verse be rude and poor and mean—
To You, the greatest as most dear—
Victoria, by God's grace Our Queen.

Such greeting as should come from those
Whose fathers faced the Sepoy hordes,
Or served You in the Russian snows,
And, dying, left their sons their swords.

And some of us have fought for You
Already in the Afghan Pass—
Or where the scarce-seen smoke-puffs flew
From Boer marksmen in the grass;

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And all are bred to do Your will
By land and sea—wherever flies
The Flag to fight and follow still,
And work Your Empire's destinies.

Once more we greet You, though unseen
Our greeting be, and coming slow.
Trust us if need arise, O Queen;
We shall not tarry with the blow!

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ECHOES

1882–1884

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THE DUKE. *A new song, sirrah?*
FIRST MINSTREL. *New as is new bread,*
Baked with the corn of yester-year, my lord:
These fledgelings of the nest will try their pipes,
And shrill it boldly in the same old tunes
You hear on every woodland bough.

OLD PLAY.

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A VISION OF INDIA

(TENNYSON)

MOTHER India, wan and thin,
  Here is forage come your way;
Take the young Civilian in,
  Kill him swiftly as you may.

Smite him with the deadly breath
  From your crowded cities sped;
Still the heart that beats beneath
  That girl's picture o'er his bed.

Brains that thought and lips that kissed,
  Mouldering under alien clay,
Stir a stagnant Civil List,
  Help us on our upward way.

(Ice the amber whisky-peg!
  Every man that yields to thee
Gives his juniors each a leg,
  Shakes the sere Pagoda-Tree.)

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A VISION OF INDIA

Well indeed we know your power,
  Goddess of our deep devotion,
Who can grant us in an hour
  Steps of rapidest promotion.

Lurking in our daily grub,
  Where the untinned *degchies*[1] lie;
Smiting gaily at the Club,
  O'er the card-room's revelry.

Chaperon to many a maid,
  Calling, when the music dies,
To a stiller, deeper shade
  Than the dim-lit balconies.

(Fill the long-necked glass with whisky!
  Every man that owns thy sway
Leaves a widow, mostly frisky,
  Makes the gossip of a day.)

Brown and Jones and Smith shall die;
  We succeed to all their places,
Bear the badge of slavery,
  Sunken eyes and pallid faces.

Laughter that is worse than tears
  Is our portion in the land,
And the tombstones of our peers
  Make the steps whereon we stand.

[1] Cooking-pots.

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THE CITY OF THE HEART

(LONGFELLOW)

I PASSED through the lonely Indian town,
Deep sunk 'twixt the walls of wheat,
And the dogs that lived in the land came down
And bayed at me in the street.

But I struck with my dog-whip o'er nose and back
Of the yelping, yellow crew,
Till I cleared a pathway athwart the pack,
And I and my horse went through.

I passed through the streets of my haunted heart,
In the hush of a hopeless night;
And from every gully a dog would start
And bay my soul with affright.

But I smote with the dog-whip of Work and Fact
These evil beasts on the head,
Till I made of my heart a wholesome tract,
Empty and garnishèd.

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THE INDIAN FARMER AT HOME

(BURNS)

HOOTS! toots! ayont, ahint, afore,
The bleth'rin' blast may blathe an' blaw
An' shak' my *dhoti*;[1]
But I am canty, crouse, and full,
An' aiblins at my pipe I pull,
Safe in my *khoti*.[2]

I bang the gudewife wi' my loof,
And shak' the dung-cakes fra' the roof
To feed the low;
An' gin my dinner crowds my *pét*,[3]
My wee bit bairnies stamp it straight
Wi' joyous crow.

What mair, I ask, could man desire
Beyont his bit of bread an' fire,
An' safe inves'ment
O' bawbees in a silver chain
To guard against a day of rain
Or raised assessment?

[1] Loin-cloth. [2] House. [3] Stomach.

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THE FLIGHT OF THE BUCKET

(BROWNING)

Pre-admonisheth the writer:
H'm, for a subject it is well enough!
Who wrote "Sordello" finds no subject tough.

WELL, Jack and Jill—God knows the life they led
(The poet never told us, more's the pity)
Pent up in some damp kennel of their own,
Beneath the hillside; but it once befell
That Jack or Jill, niece, cousin, uncle, aunt
(Some one of all the brood) would wash or scour—
Rinse out a cess-pit, swab the kennel floor,
And water (*liquor vitæ*, Lawson calls,
But I—I hold by whisky. Never mind;
I didn't mean to hurt your feelings, sir,
And missed the scrap o' blue at buttonhole)—
Spring water was the needful at the time,
So they must climb the hill for't. Well and good.
We all climb hills, I take it, on some quest,
Maybe for less than stinking (I forgot!
I mean than wholesome) water. . . . Ferret out
The rotten bucket from the lumber-shed,
Weave ropes and splice the handle—off they go

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THE FLIGHT OF THE BUCKET

To where the cold spring bubbles up i' the cleft,
And sink the bucket brimful in the spate.
Then downwards—hanging back? (You bet your life
The girl's share fell upon Jack's shoulders.) Down,
Down to the bottom—all but—trip, slip, squelch!
And guggle-guggle goes the bucketful
Back to the earth, and Jack's a broken head,
And swears amid the heather does our Jack.
(A man would swear who watched both blood and bucket,
One dripping down his forehead, t'other fled,
Clinkety-tinkle, to the stones below,
A good half-hour's trudge to get it back.)
Jack, therefore, as I said, exploded straight
In brimstone-flavoured language. You, of course,
Maintain he bore it calmly—not a bit.
A good bucolic curse that rent the cliffs
And frightened for a moment quaking Jill
Out of the limp, unmeaning girl's tee-hee
That womankind delight in. . . . Here we end
The first verse—there's a deal to study in't.

. . . . . .

So much for Jack—but here's a Fate above,
A cosmic force that blunders into right,
Just when the strained sense hints at revolution
Because the world's great fly-wheel runs aslant—
And up go Jill's red kibes. (You think I'm wrong;
And Fate was napping at the time; perhaps
You're right.) We'll call it Devil's agency
That sent the shrieking sister on her head,

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And knocked the tangled locks against the stones.
Well, down went Jill, but wasn't hurt. Oh, no!
The Devil pads the world to suit his own,
And packs the cards according. Down went Jill
Unhurt. And Jack trots off to bed, poor brute,
Fist welted into eyeball, mouth agape
For yelling,—your bucolic always yells,—
And out of his domestic pharmacy
Rips forth the cruet-stand, upsets the cat,
And ravages the store-room for his balm.
Eureka!—but he didn't use that word—
A pound of candles, corpse-like, side by side,
Wrapped up in his medicament. Out, knife!
Cut string, and strip the shrouding from the lot!
Steep swift and jam it on the gaping cut;
Then bedward—cursing man and fiends alike.

. . . . . .

Now back to Jill. She wasn't hurt, I said,
And all the woman's spite was up in arms.
So Jack's abed. She slips, peeks through the door,
And sees the split head like a luggage-label,
Halved, quartered, on the pillow. "Ee-ki-ree,
Tee-hee-hee-hee," she giggles through the crack,
Much as the Roman ladies grinned—don't smile—
To see the dabbled bodies in the sand,
Appealing to their benches for a sign.
Down thumbs, and giggle louder—so did Jill.
But mark now! Comes the mother round the door,
Red-hot from climbing up the hill herself,
And caught the graceless giggler. Whack! flack!
whack!

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THE FLIGHT OF THE BUCKET

Here's Nemesis whichever way you like!
She didn't stop to argue. Given a head
Broken, a woman chuckling at the door,
And here's your circumstantial evidence complete.
Whack! while Jack sniffs and sniggers from the bed.
I like that horny-handed mother o' Jill.
The world's best women died, sir, long ago.
Well, Jack's avenged; as for the other, *gr-r-r-r!*

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LAOCOON

(M. ARNOLD)

UNDER the shadow of Death,
Under the stroke of the sword,
Gain we our daily bread.
Exile that hath no end,
And the heaping up of our woes,
Are given into our hand
As the gifts of the Gods to men.

Lo! in a leaguered town,
Compassed by many foes,
Weary citizens wait,
Neither joyed nor afraid,
The unseen doom of the shot—
Only, at times, when a friend
Falls from their side and is lost
Out of his place on the wall,
Lift they their hands aloft,
Crying aloud to the Gods,
The pitiless, far-off Gods:
"Spare us this last for a space—
Not for ourselves, indeed,
Seeing that this is our right,
But for our children and wives!"

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So, under Indian skies,
Compassed by many ills,
Weary workers abide,
Neither joyed nor afraid,
Waiting the unseen doom.
Only, at times, when a friend
Falls at their side and is lost
Out of his place in their life,
Lift they their hearts aloft,
Crying aloud: "If a God
Govern the ways of men,
Spare us this last for a space—
Not for ourselves, indeed,
Seeing that this is our right,
But for our children and wives!"

Neither joyed nor afraid
Of the snakes of circumstance,—
The marble snakes of mishap
That girdle our fleshly limbs,—
We of the East abide:
But if at times our souls,
Being broken by ills,
Blench and are sorely disturbed,—
Not for ourselves, indeed
(Seeing that this is our right),
But for our children and wives,—
Shall we be judged as afraid
By our complaining, O God?

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NURSERY RHYMES FOR LITTLE ANGLO-INDIANS

HUSH-A-BY, Baby,
In the verandah!
When the sun drops
Baby may wander.

When the hot weather comes
Baby will die—
With a fine *pucca*[1] tomb
In the ce-me-te-ry.

I HAD a little husband
Who gave me all his pay.
I left him for Mussoorie,
A hundred miles away.

I dragged my little husband's name
Through heaps of social mire,
And joined him in October,
As good as you'd desire.

[1] Permanent.

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SEE-SAW, Justice and Law,
The *Raiyats* shall have a new master.
And the Zemindar ain't allowed to distraint
Because they can't pay any faster.

SING a Song of Sixpence,
Purchased by our lives —
Decent English gentlemen
Roasting with their wives

In the plains of India,
Where like flies they die.
Isn't that a wholesome risk
To get our living by?

The fever's in the Jungle,
The typhoid's in the tank,
And men may catch the cholera
Apart from social rank;

And Death is in the Garden,
A-waiting till we pass,
For the *Krait* is in the drain-pipe,
The Cobra in the grass!

With a lady flirt a little—
'Tis *manners* so to do.
Of a lady speak but little—
'Tis *safest* so to do.

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NURSERY RHYMES

JACK'S own Jill goes up to the Hill
Of Murree or Chakrata.
Jack remains, and dies in the plains,
And Jill remarries soon arter.

MARY, Mary, quite contrary,
Where do your subalterns go?
For love is brief and the next "relief"
Will scatter them all like snow.

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TOBACCO

(KEATS)

SWEET is the Rose's scent—Tobacco's smell
Is sweeter; wherefore let me charge again.
Old blackened meerschaum, I have loved thee well
From youth, when smoke brought sickness in its train.
Foolish I was: Manillas I disdained,
And cigarettes to Burmahs did prefer,
And even spurned Havana's fragrant joy;
But now my mind is pained,
In that my smoking days I did defer,
Nor knew this pleasure when I was a boy.

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APPROPRIATE VERSES ON AN ELEGANT LANDSCAPE

(COWPER)

THE fields were upholstered with poppies so red,
And black as my hat was each rook;
And the hedges were bordered, like quilts on a bed,
With the bombazine braid of the brook.

And I thought to myself, with an auctioneer's smirk,
As I gazed on the freehold so rare:
"O Lord, if on Earth these chaste shows are thy work,
Of what is the Kingdom up there?"

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HIS CONSOLATION

(BROWNING)

So be it; you give me my release,
  And let me go. Yes, I am free.
But think you that a love will cease
  By bidding merely? Can yon sea
    Stop at the tide's increase?

You hold the matter ended, then?
  Are right if you begin anew?
You turn your eyes on other men.
  Can that fact cut my love from you,
    If you win one or ten?

Your words count nothing, since your soul
  Is mine—as you will find at last,
When you have finished out the whole
  Of life, and stare at me aghast,
    Waiting you at the goal.

You cannot, *cannot* understand?
  Go forward, then. The time will be
When, lip to lip and hand to hand,
  By some far-distant planet's sea
    We meet—and *I* command.

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THE CURSING OF STEPHEN

(TENNYSON)

I TURNED the pages of the baby's book,
I hung with children on the rocking-horse,
And shook the rattle till it rang again;
And, while I gambolled 'mid these buds of youth,
I shaped the nursery legend into this:

King Stephen, o'er the castled battlement
That frowned above the fir-copse and the lake,
Looked downward on his people and beheld
The many-mouthèd nation call on him
Who was a worthy peer. The pine-woods rang,
In slumb'rous thunder to the girdling sea,
With "Worthy peer"; and, down the long white
street,
Green-shuttered cots re-echoed: "Worthy peer."
But in the great king's bosom pain was lord,
And 'neath his brows the royal eyeball burnt,
As dying brands burn on the wasted hearth
When those that tend them slumber. Slowly first
The hot words brake beneath the bearded lips,
And the mailed hand slid backward to the throne
Whereon the king was seated. As some dam
In spring bursts down the wall and whelms the vale,

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So broke the king's "Damn" o'er the silent Court,
And stilled the Jester into utter peace,
And all the courtiers wondered where they sate
"What ails King Stephen!" Then the great king spoke,
As Saul had spoken in the shrouded tent,
Before the Son of Jesse soothed his soul
With sackbut and with psaltery: "Woe is me!
Sin creeps upon our servants at the board,
And in my royal palace find we sin—
At first among the lowest; being low,
They sin as brutes, in brutal bestial wise.
But ever upward curls the flame of sin,
Infecting e'en the highest. Lust of gain,
That spareth not the person of the king,
Hath fallen upon us, and behold I go
To fight corruption, though I lose my life;
Not loving life, but rather fearing death,
With life's corruption on my parting soul.
Pray for me, O my courtiers!" And they wailed,
Those bearded rulers of the fosse and field,
Great princes of the Plough-tail, for the king;
And sorrow hung about the sobbing Court,
And that great charger squealed like any she.
So, in the twilight, passed the king away
Adown the long white street, all armed and mailed,
Past dune and wind-swept hedge-row, till he reached
A low-built cottage by the roaring sea,
Wherein one sat for ever at a board,
Cross-legged, and drave the needle to and fro,
Through silk and samite, minever and lawn,

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THE CURSING OF STEPHEN

As swine in autumn pierce the fallen mast
For forage with their keen, white, curvèd tusks;
And evermore the singer sang his song,
And through the windows Stephen heard the strain:

"A Devil and a Tailor, fiend and man,
That were at strife since first the world began—
Read me my riddle's reading an you can.

"A Tailor and a Devil—man and sprite.
Black as black thread was one—the other white
As cloth that clothes the great king's limbs at night.

"The Devil and the Tailor. Silk and thread,
O primrose minever! O samite red,
That drapes the curtains of the great king's bed!

"For men must clothe their nakedness, and I,
For credit or for cash, give swift supply
Of woven gauds and broidered bravery."

And then the voice ceased suddenly within,
Because the charger whinnied through the dusk,
And shook the windows of the crazy cot.
Whereon, with eyelids shaded, and huge shears
Slung swordwise at his side, the churl advanced,
And saw the great king's shadow on the door,
But made no reverence, as befits a churl
In royal presence, only, from his breast,
Dragged forth a store of papers, tape, and thread,
And murmured: "Credit is the thief of time!

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My gold, King Stephen, for the doublet gay,
For hose and baldric, now some three months old,
And for the broidered cloak upon thy back—
My gold, King Stephen!" But the blameless king
Drew swiftly from his scabbard that which pays
All debts in one; and at the great blade's light
The churl fled backward to the cottage door,
And Stephen spake in this wise to the churl:
"I, being king, an I had cleft thy form
From chin to chine, had sullied my good sword
With useless slaughter of a ninth-part man;
And I am come in sorrow, not in wrath,
To judge thee for thy treason 'gainst the king;
Our noble order has no thought of guile
To me or mine—my menials know no sin,
And all my people are a sinless folk,
Content with little save the gifts of God
And my exceeding glory. Only thou,
Misled by lust of gold, hast fallen in sin—
The deadlier, being self-conceived: for sin
Caught by contagion (as the dove's red foot
Is soiled by mire) is a lesser fault
Than crime self-centred in a single breast
And bred in isolation. I, thy king,
Have worn the garments of a spotless life,
And also (since the world desires more
For human limbs) some garments made by thee;
And these were hose and doublet, as thou sayest,
And also breeches for my lower limbs,
And in these breeches lieth all thy sin:
Rapine and greed, and interest sought on bills,

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And monthly increment of silver coin
Charged for the lapse of time—which is God's act,
Nor any handiwork of thine, O churl;
And thou, being void of shame, hast written down
The cost of these same breeches that I wear
At usury and interest, sinful churl,
And I adjudge the cost exorbitant
By six round pence. Behold!" and here his hand
Slid backward to the cantle of his selle,
And grasped the spacious garment that he wore
In kingly wrath. "Behold the size of it!
The airy effluence of fold on fold,
And mazy complications of the seat,
Between the saddle and my royal flesh,
Chafed to a gall thereby. This is thy work—
Large and ill-fitting as the wrinkled buds
That hide the larches' children in the spring.
Thank, therefore, such vile stars as saw thy birth
That silver and not steel discharge the debt. . . .
Yet Lancelot falls to his own love again,
And tailors reel into the ninth-part beast
And wholly vermin—and my speech, I fear,
Falls deadly on dull ears that can but catch
The clink of shears and silver. Wherefore churl,
I am resolved to curse thee—not in wrath,
For wrath is alien to the minds of kings,
But for remembrance' sake, and, ere I go,
I call thee—out of sorrow, not in wrath—
I, Stephen, call thee *Lown*." And all the weald
Shuddered at Stephen's curse, and far at sea
The fishes shivered, though they knew not why;

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And homeward-flying crows forgot to call
At sound of the king's curse. And he, the churl,
Shrank as the beetle shrinks beneath the pin
When village children stab him in their sport,
And, logwise, rolled before the charger's feet;
And Stephen came to his own Court again.

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JANE SMITH

(WORDSWORTH)

I JOURNEYED, on a winter's day,
  Across the lonely wold;
No bird did sing upon the spray,
  And it was very cold.

I had a coach with horses four,
  Three white (though one was black),
And on they went the common o'er,
  Nor swiftness did they lack.

A little girl ran by the side,
  And she was pinched and thin.
"Oh, please, sir, *do* give me a ride!
  I'm fetching mother's gin."

"Enter my coach, sweet child," said I:
  "For you shall ride with me,
And I will get you your supply
  Of mother's eau-de-vie."

The publican was stern and cold,
  And said: "Her mother's score
Is writ, as you shall soon behold,
  Behind the bar-room door!"

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JANE SMITH

I blotted out the score with tears,
And paid the money down,
And took the maid of thirteen years
Back to her mother's town;

And though the past with surges wild
Fond memories may sever,
The vision of that happy child
Will leave my spirit never!

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NURSERY IDYLS

(CHRISTINA ROSSETTI'S "SING-SONG")

A LITTLE sigh, a little shiver—
And that means liver.
A little liver when June is nigh,
And then we die.

DAFFODILS in English fields
And breezes in the clover;
But here's a sun would strike you dead
Seven times over!

Cook's tourist comes and goes—
He is but a rover,
While *I* watch the burning sun
Turn over and over.

And I dream of daffodils
And the breezy clover;
Turning on my little bed,
Over and over.

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NURSERY IDYLS

IN England elm-leaves fall
When winter winds blow keen,
But the Indian *pipál*
Is always gay and green.

Ne'er in rain or sunshine
Leaf or blossom dies—
But I'd give the world for an English elm
Under English skies!

HERE'S a mongoose
Dead in the sluice
Of the bath-room drain.
How was he slain?
He must have lain
Days, it is plain. . . .
Stopper your nose,
Throw him out to the crows.

TARA CHAND is the gardener's mate,
And labours late and early;
But Dunni is my pony's *syce*,[1]
And steals the golden barley.

Golden barley, roses red,
Rejoice in your morning beauty!
For I have broken Tara's head,
And given Dunni *chuti*.[2]

[1] Groom. [2] His dismissal.

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SONNET

(ON BEING REJECTED OF ONE'S HORSE)

(WILFRED BLUNT)

GIVE me my rein, my *syce!* Give me my rein!
I have a need of it, an absolute need,
To climb upon that bounding back again
And curb the bad, mad gambols of my steed.
'T is strange we are thus parted—by no lust
Of mine, but rather blind, unwearied force
That worked upon the sinews of my horse,
And drove me from him, howling in the dust.

Now he is neither gentle, kind, nor quiet,
And strives (though vainly) to outleap his girth,
While right and left the armèd hooves are hurled.
O Destrier! bethink thee that this riot
Shall, in the end, bring neither rest nor mirth. . . .
Only the heaviest bit in all the world!

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KOPRA-BRAHM

(EMERSON)

COSMIC force and Cawnpore leather
Hold my walking-boots together.
All the gnomes of Under-earth
Travailed at my tie-pin's birth.
Myriad dryads, nude and quick,
Brake for me my walking-stick,
Breathing still in every knot
Of the Javan bamboo-plot.
Brotherly, where'er I go,
Sheep regard my paletot,
And the silkworm thrills to note
How his fathers warm my throat.
Atropos, with iron shears,
Cut the cap that guards my ears.
Thus Alphonso's mind can see
In each garment Deity.
And though loose the trousers' fit,
Nature's forces fashioned it.
Wherefore, steads it not to see
Tailor's work *criti*cally,
But, with wide-embracing mind,

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KOPRA-BRAHM

Gaze at them before, behind.
Since, beyond his needful clothes,
Something more each man-soul owes,
Brahma shall endue thy shirt,
(With thy belt is Zeus engirt),
And the tread of either sole
Waken echoes round the Pole!

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THE SUDDER BAZAAR

THE motive that calls for my ditty
Is to tell you how many things are
To be found on the road to the City,
Which we call it the Sudder Bazaar.

When the Mission bell's tinkling insistence
Has ceased, through the dust-laden air
Comes the call from the Mosque in the distance—
The call of the Faithful to prayer.

Unmoved, though the world fall asunder,
The voice of the *muezzin*[1] you hear,
While our guns, in the citadel under,
Are booming for Tel-el-Kebir.

With an eye to where offal and meat lie,
The kite circles near and afar,
And the pie-dog sleeps calmly and sweetly
In the dust of the Sudder Bazaar.

[1] Mohammedan priest.

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THE SUDDER BAZAAR.

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And the wrinkled old sweet-seller squats there,
With his daughters (two two-year-old houris),
And his sweetmeats in baskets and pots there,
And his bank, a fat bag full of cowries.

There the Kabuli horse-dealers swagger
In sheepskins—the skinny side out—
And jostle the Deccan quail-bagger
And the pleader's ubiquitous tout.

Staid bulls, much beloved of the Brahman,
Stroll round, taking food as they go;
And the cat shares its meal with that "varmin,"
The bottomless-pit-coloured crow;

While the *ekka* (a tea-tray on wheels, dear)
Flies past, as the occupants sit,
(Since a pony, you know, never feels, dear),
All five tugging hard at the bit;

And the wicked wee tats with a coat of
Fluffed wool (brought down south in the hope
Of a sale) like the man Swinburne wrote of,
"Kick heels with their neck in a rope";

Disturbing the marriage procession
And its cohort of tom-tomming men,
And the bridegroom's sublime self-possession—
That dusky young husband of ten.

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THE SUDDER BAZAAR

In the midst of this turmoil pell-mell met,
  You may catch from the spot where you stand
Some glimpse of T. Atkins's helmet—
  The power that governs the land.

And these are a few of the faces
  Of strangers come in from afar,
Of the *olla podrida* of races
  That seethes in the Sudder Bazaar;

Some notes from the gamut of face-tints,
  That ranges through yellow to tar—
The pavement mosaic of race-tints,
  That mottles the Sudder Bazaar.

But what do I care for their faces,
  For the *jât*, the *fakir*, or the Sikh,
When here, in these populous places,
  I meet ninety thousand a week?

Oh, give me the wet walks of London,
  And a tramp with my sweetheart as well,
And our "Power in the East" may be undone,
  And the Sudder Bazaar go to . . . Well,

So this is the reason, my dearest,
  When I walk where those infidels are,
That I bang the small boy who stands nearest,
  And flee from the Sudder Bazaar.

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COMMONPLACES

(HEINE)

RAIN on the face of the sea,
  Rain on the sodden land,
And the window-pane is blurred with rain
  As I watch it, pen in hand.

Mist on the face of the sea,
  Mist on the sodden land,
Filling the vales as daylight fails,
  And blotting the desolate sand.

Voices from out of the mist,
  Calling to one another:
"Hath love an end, thou more than friend,
  "Thou dearer than ever brother?"

Voices from out of the mist,
  Calling and passing away;
But I cannot speak, for my voice is weak,
  And . . . this is the end of my lay.

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QUÆRITUR

(SWINBURNE)

DAWN that disheartens the desolate dunes,
Dulness of day as it bursts on the beach,
Sea-wind that shrillest the thinnest of tunes,
What is the wisdom thy wailings would teach?
Far, far away, down the foam-frescoed reach,
Where ravening rocks cleave the crest of the seas,
Sigheth the sound of thy sonorous speech,
As grey gull and guillemot gather their fees;
Taking toll of the beasts that are bred in the seas.

Foam-flakes fly farther than faint eyes can follow—
Drop down the desolate dunes and are done;
Fleeter than foam-flowers flitteth the Swallow,
Sheer for the sweets of the South and the Sun.
What is thy tale, O thou treacherous Swallow?
Sing me thy secret, Beloved of the Skies,
That I may gather my garments and follow—
Flee on the path of thy pinions and rise
Where strong storms cease and the weary wind dies.

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QUÆRITUR

Lo! I am bound with the chains of my sorrow;
  Swallow, swift Swallow, ah, wait for a while!
Stay but a moment—it may be to-morrow
  Chains shall be severed and sad souls shall smile!
Only a moment—a mere minute's measure—
  How shall it hurt such a swift one as thou?
Pitiless Swallow, full flushed for thy pleasure,
  Canst thou not even one instant allow
  To weaker-winged wanderers? Wait for me now!

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LONDON TOWN

THERE'S no God in London,
Weary, wicked London.
For, look you, I've lost my friend—
Lost her in London.
My heart's best friend
Is astray in London,
Your terrible London!

You've miles of granite streets
In stony London;
And millions toiling in London,
Crowded London;
But I cannot find my friend,
My poor lost friend,
For the tumult and traffic of London,
Pitiless London!

It's cruel seeking in London,
Boundless London,
For a face that'll never come—
For the face of a friend,
The face of my lost, lost friend,
Lost in London.
There's no God in London,
Your terrible London!

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HIMALAYAN

(JOAQUIN MILLER)

NOW the land is ringed with a circle of fire,
Burnt with the fire and dead with drought,
And the bare, brown fields hold the heat of hell—
Wherefore I tell you, once and for all,
Fly with the speed of a hot desire;
Fly from the land that is parched and dead,
To Simla or Murree or Naini Tal,
With a limber *lunkah*[1] thrust in your mouth,
And a *solah topee* to guard your head,
And a tat beneath you can trust to *chel*.[2]

For the hills look down on the burnt plains under,
And the great green mountains are good to see—
Fair to behold and sweet to gain;
They are capped with the snow and cooled with the rain,
Cooled with the tears of the wailing thunder.
Wherefore, I tell you, mount and ride,
Till the spurs are red and the whip-hand tires,
And the saddle is broken across the tree—
Till your spurs are red in your horse's side—
Fly from the heat of our summer fires!

[1] Cheroot. [2] Go.

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HIMALAYAN

The sky is lead and our faces are red,
And the winds of Hell are loosened and driven,
And the gates of Hell are opened and riven,
And the dust flies up in the face of Heaven,
And the clouds come down in a fiery sheet,
Heavy to raise and hard to be borne.
And the mind of man is turned from his meat—
Turned from the trifles for which he has striven,
Sick in his body, and heavy-hearted;
And his soul flies up like the dust in the street—
Flies from his flesh and is gone and departed,
As the blast that they blow on the cholera-horn.

Wherefore, I say, while life remains,
While the knees can grip and the right hand flog,
Fly with the speed of a parted lover
From the heated heavens that cloak and cover
The burning heat of the bare, brown plains.
Flee to the mountains, once and for all—
To the calm, cool rains and the drifting fog,
To the rains that cool and the clouds that hover
O'er Simla, Murree, or Naini Tal!

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OUR LADY OF MANY DREAMS

We pray to God, and to God it seems
  Our prayers go heavenward;
But She, our Lady of many Dreams,
  Keepeth a secret guard,
And by virtue of every vow we vowed,
  And by every oath we sware,
Is all our worship disallowed,
  And She taketh toll of the prayer.
God is above, but She below,
  Instant and very fair.

And the stroke of the sword is Hers by right,
  And every stroke of the pen,
And the brain and the tongue and the muscles' might,
  For She ruleth divers men;
And the brutal strength is consecrate
  To Her service and Her will,
And the writer labours early and late,
  And the felon doeth ill.
God is above, but She below,
  That we labour or write, or kill.

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OUR LADY OF MANY DREAMS

In a secret shrine, far out of sight,
  Seen by no other eyes,
Lieth our Lady day and night
  (Marvellous fair and wise);
For her shrine is set in a heart's red throne
  By our pulse's fall and rise,
And we pray to Her, and to Her is known
  All good that in us lies.
God is above, but She below
  Compelleth our destinies.

Whether our Lady be gently bred,
  Or sprung of the city's sin;
Whether Her dress be silk or thread,
  Or Her cheeks be full or thin;
Whether Her hair be black or gold,
  Or brown, or blanched, or grey;
Whether our Lady be young or old,
  Is only one that can say—
And he is both Priest and Worshipper
  Whose eyes are turned on my lay!

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A MURDER IN THE COMPOUND

AT the wall's foot a smear of fly-flecked red—
  Discoloured grass wherefrom the wild bees flee.
Across the pathway to the flower-bed,
  The dark stream struggles forward, lazily,
Blackened by that fierce fervour overhead
She does not heed, to whom the noontide glare
  And the flies' turmoil round her livid lips
Are less account than that green puddle where,
  Just out of reach, the turbid water slips
Between the corn-ridge and the *siris* trees. . . .
  The crows are gathered now, and peer and glance
Athwart the branches, and no passer sees,
  When Life's last flicker leaves her countenance,
How, merrily, they drop down, one by one,
To that gay-tinted bundle in the sun.

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"'WAY DOWN THE RAVI RIVER"

I WANDERED by the riverside,
To gaze upon the view,
And watched the Alligator glide
After the dead Hindoo,
Who stank and sank beneath the tide,
Then rose and stank anew.

The evening dews were falling fast,
The damp, unwholesome dew;
The river rippled 'neath the blast,
The black crow roostward flew;
And swift the Alligator passed
In chase of his Hindoo.

And, from the margin of the tide,
I watched the twain that fled—
The Alligator, scaly-thighed,
Close pressed the flying dead,
Who gazed, with eyeballs opened wide,
Upward, but nothing said.

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"'WAY DOWN THE RAVI RIVER"

And many a time at eventide,
As night comes on anew,
I think upon the riverside
Where, gazing on the view,
I watched the Alligator glide
After the dead Hindoo.

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AMOUR DE VOYAGE

AND I was a man who could write you rhyme
(Just so much for you—nothing more),
And you were the woman I loved for a time—
Loved for a little, and nothing more.
We shall go our ways when the voyage is o'er,
You with your beauty and I with my rhymes,
With a dim remembrance rising at times
(Only a memory, nothing more)
Of a lovely face and some worthless rhymes.

Meantime till our comedy reaches its end
(Its comic ending, and nothing more)
I shall live as your lover who loved as a friend—
Shall swear true love till Life be o'er.
And you, you must make believe and attend,
As the steamer throbs from shore to shore.

And so, we shall pass the time for a little
(Pass it in pleasure, and nothing more),
For vows, alas! are sadly brittle,
And each may forget the oaths that we swore.

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AMOUR DE VOYAGE

And have we not loved for an age, an age?
  And was I not yours from shore to shore?
From landing-stage to landing-stage
  Did I not worship and kneel and adore?
And what is a month in love but an age?
  And who in their senses would wish for more?

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FAILURE

ONE brought her Fire from a distant place,
And She—what should she know of it?—she took
His offering with the same untroubled look
Of peace upon her face.

"And I have brought it of my best," quoth he,
"By barren deserts and a frozen land.
What recompense?" She could not understand,
But let the bright light be.

"A kindly gift," the answer broke at length,
"A kindly gift. We thank you. What is this
That fiercer than all household fire is,
And gathereth in strength?

"Strange fires? Take them hence with you, O sir!
Presage of coming woe we dimly feel."
Sudden She crushed the embers 'neath her heel,—
And all light went with Her.

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HOW THE DAY BROKE

DRAWING-ROOM SONG

THE night was very silent, and the moon was going down,
And the winds of dawn were chilling all the sea.
The full tide turned in silver o'er the ridge's length of brown,
When a little muffled figure left the dim-seen, sleeping town
By the white road that leadeth to the sea;

The night was very silent, and the tide was falling fast,
And the dawn was breaking dimly o'er the sea;
The early boats like shadows with their lanterns flitted past,
And the little muffled figure by the sand-hills stayed at last,
Where the waste land opens on the sea.

The night is well-nigh ended, and the moon has gone to rest
And the winds of dawn are lashing all the sea.
But the weariness is over and the doubt is all confessed,

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HOW THE DAY BROKE

And hope is re-arisen and the wrong is all redressed,
As the little muffled figure lays her head upon his breast
Who has waited for her coming by the sea.

The night is passed and done with, and the day is cold and white
As the loosed winds riot o'er the sea,
But the woe is passed and done with as a shadow of the night,
And the little muffled figure flitteth, singing, out of sight
To the fishing-town that faces on the sea.

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A LOCKED WAY

"OPEN the Gate!
The dawn is very near at hand.
My eyes are heavy, I have wandered late,
And trod the white road from a distant land
That stretches 'neath the stars. Open the Gate!"

"What good is it?
I set the heavy bars up long ago.
The lock is rusted; I have lost the key.
How should I open to my overthrow?
O Youth's love, what have I to do with thee?"

"Open the Gate!
The night is passing—thou mayest see it pass.
Behold, the upland hills are tipped with fire!
The dawn-winds blow across the upland grass.
The cocks crow. Open thou, my heart's desire!"

"That will not I.
This is no true daybreak my sad eyes see.
How shall I open? Broadens not one whit
The white light that so often mockèd me.
How shall I open to a lying cry?
What good is it?"

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A LOCKED WAY

"Open the Gate!
The night is truly ended, O my dear!
My feet are bleeding! I am sick to death!
Open the Gate! God's own red sun is here!
The shadows flee, and the land quickeneth.
O Love, for Pity, open thou the Gate!"

"Nay, then—for ruth
I open. I have little love for thee,
And I am sorely changèd since our youth,
And there is little beauty left in me. . . .
For Pity have I opened . . . but, in truth,
I . . . had . . . not . . . thought. . . with Pity . . .
Love might be!"

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LAND-BOUND

RUN down to the sea, O River,
  Haste thee down to the sea—
To the foaming strife at the Bar
  Where the grey breakwaters are,
And the buoys roll merrily
In the dip and heave of the sea
  Coming over the Bar.

Bear me with thee, O River—
  On the rush of thy flood to the sea—
I am sick of this smooth, green land;
  I long for the breeze off the sand.
Take me away with thee
To the shifting face of the sea,
  And the low, wind-bitten strand.

Bear me swiftly, O River,
  My heart is athirst for the sea,—
To the dotted herring-floats
  And the brown, tar-fragrant boats,
And the little wave-washed quay—
I am sick of hedge-row and tree,
  And the hills in their stifling coats.

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THE BALLAD OF THE KING'S DAUGHTER

OLD BALLAD

"If my Love come to me over the water,
Lowly born, and the King stood by,
How should I greet him, a Monarch's daughter—
Coldly, strangely, and haughtily?

"If my Love come to me over the land,
Lowly-born, and the King stood by,
Should I kiss him, or give him a frozen hand,
Coldly, strangely, and haughtily?"

Many came to her over the water,
Princes all, and the King stood by
But she gave them the scorn of a Monarch's daughter,
Coldly, strangely, and haughtily.

Many came to her over the land,
Princes all, and the King stood by;
But she gave them to kiss a frozen hand,
Coldly, strangely, and haughtily.

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BALLAD OF THE KING'S DAUGHTER

There came to her one from over the water,
  Lowly born, and the King stood by;
And the warm blood flushed through the Monarch's
    daughter,
  And lo! she fell on his neck with a cry.

Many there be by land and water,
  (Wait and watch ye patiently)
That gave their love to a Monarch's daughter,
  That bound their heart in the days gone by.

Hope is little by land or water,
  Wait and watch ye patiently.
Gold wins not a Monarch's daughter,
    Neither jewels nor bravery.

Get ye fame by land and water,
    That your name live and do not die,
And ye win the love of a Monarch's daughter . . . .
    Little of blessing comes thereby.

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HOW THE GODDESS AWAKENED

WHERE the reveller laid him, drunk with wine,
At the foot of my marble pedestal,
They are wailing aloud; they call me divine—
Wherefore is it on me that they call?
What have I done for the men of this city,
For the pallid folk who bend at the shrine
And call upon me: "*Maid Divine,*
"*Mother of Sorrows, have thou pity!*"

What can I tell of their joy or woe—
I, who was fashioned long ago
By the olive slopes of the marble city,
Where green leaves hid the temple wall?
Wherefore is it on me that they call:
"*Mother of Jesus, have thou pity!*"

What should I know of sorrow—I?
How should I listen tenderly?
Sorrow was not in the old white city;
But laughter and love and men and wine
In the temple below me that was mine.
Who am I, that should give them pity

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As, row upon row, they call on my shrine:
" *Mother of Sorrows, Maid Divine,*
Spotless Virgin, have thou pity!"
. . . . . .
They brought me forth from under the mould
(For I, too, fell with my city's fall),
They gave my hands a cross to hold,
They cramped my limbs in cloth of gold,
And set me up to be seen of all.
They came and bowed themselves at my shrine,
These strange, pale folk of the dreary city,
And called upon me: "*Mother Divine,*
Mother of Sorrows, have thou pity!"

I fain would be where I once have been,
Where the nude limbs flashed through the vine-leaves green,
Where I heard the sound of the summer sea
Far off, and warriors came to me,
And hung their arms the boughs between—
Strong shapes, and I was held their queen.
These men would surely welcome me
With that wild song I know so well
Before my marble city fell—
Before the foemen took the city
(Before I bowed myself and fell),
Before they brought me here to dwell,
These men that know not of my city,
And set me in an alien shrine,
And called upon me: " *Maid Divine,*
Mother of Sorrows, have thou pity!"

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And, in those days, I saw the sun,
  My brother, greet me in the morn.
But now I see not any one
  Of those I know, while folk forlorn
Flock round me, calling on a name
  I know not, and they give it me.
  I, foam-born, risen from the sea,
  My names were many in the city
Of marble, but *this* is not mine:
" *Mother of Sorrows, Maid Divine,*
  Spotless Virgin, have thou pity!"

And, in those years, the stars were bright,
  And all the night was full of love;
But now I see not any light,
  Save what from meagre slits above
Slopes downward on my forehead white.
  I would that I could turn and move
And visit mine own lovèd city,
And hear the laughter as of old,
And see the waters touched with gold
  Far off, and feel against my knees
The boy's warm cheek. Then should I know
  Mine own old happiness and ease.
But here there is no sound save woe:
" *Holy Virgin, Mother Divine,*
Bend we low at thy sacred shrine.
  Mother of Jesus, have thou pity!"

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THE MAID OF THE MEERSCHAUM

(SWINBURNE)

NUDE nymph, when from Neuberg's I led her
In velvet enshrined and encased,
When with rarest Virginia I fed her,
And pampered each maidenly taste
On "Old Judge" and "Lone Jack" and brown "Bird's-eye,"
The best that a mortal might get—
Did she know how, from whiteness of curds, I
Should turn her to jet?

She was blond and impassive and stately
When first our acquaintance began,
When she smiled from the pipe-bowl sedately
On the "Stunt" who was scarcely a man.
But *labuntur anni fugaces*,
And changed in due season were we,
For *she* wears the blackest of faces,
And I'm a D.C.[1]

[1] Deputy Commissioner.

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Unfailing the comfort she gave me
In the days when I owned to a heart,
When the charmers that used to enslave me
For Home or the Hills would depart.
She was Polly or Agnes or Kitty
(Whoever *pro tem.* was my flame),
And I found her most ready to pity,
And—always the same.

At dawn, when the pig broke from cover,
At noon, when the pleaders were met,
She clung to the lips of her lover
As never live maiden did yet;
At the Bund, when I waited the far light
That brought me my mails o'er the main—
At night, when the tents, in the starlight,
Showed white on the plain.

And now, though each finely cut feature
Is flattened and polished away,
I hold her the loveliest creature
That ever was fashioned from clay.
Let an epitaph thus, then, be wrought for
Her tomb, when the smash shall arrive:
"*Hic jacet* the life's love I bought for
Rupees twenty-five."

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ESTUNT THE GRIFF

(MORRIS)

Argument: Showing how a man of England, hearing from certain Easterlings of the glories of their land, sets sail to rule it.

AND so unto the End of Graves came he,
Where nigh the staging, ready for the sea,
Oarless and sailless lay the galley's bulk,
Albeit smoke did issue from the hulk
And fell away, across the marshes dun,
Into the visage of the wan-white sun.
And seaward ran the river, cold and grey,
Bearing the brown-sailed Eastland boats away
'Twixt the low shore and shallow sandy spit.
Yet he, being sad, took little heed of it,
But straightly fled toward the misty beach,
And hailed in choked and swiftly spoken speech
A shallop, that for men's conveyance lay
Hard by the margin of that watery way.
Then many that were in like evil plight—
Sad folk, with drawn, dumb lips and faces white,
That writhed themselves into a hopeless smile—
Crowded the shallop, making feint the while

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Of merriment and pleasure at that tide,
Though oft upon the laughers' lips there died
The jest, and in its place there came a sigh,
So that men gat but little good thereby,
And, shivering, clad themselves about with furs.
Strange faces of the swarthy outlanders
Looked down upon the shallop as she threw
The sullen waters backward from her screw
And, running forward for some little space,
Stayed featly at the galley's mounting-place,
Where slowly these sad-facèd landsmen went
Crab-wise and evil-mouthed with discontent,
Holding to sodden rope and rusty chain
And bulwark that was wetted with the rain:
For 'neath their feet the black bows rose and fell,
Nor might a man walk steadfastly or well
Who had not hand upon a rail or rope;
And Estunt turned him landward, and wan hope
Grew on his spirit as an evil mist,
Thinking of loving lips his lips had kissed
An hour since, and how those lips were sweet
An hour since, far off in Fenchurch Street.
Then, with a deep-drawn breath 'most like a sigh,
He watched the empty shallop shoreward hie;
Then turned him round the driving rain to face,
And saw men heave the anchor from its place,
Whereat, when by the river-mouth, the ship
Began, amid the waters' strife, to dip.
His soul was heaved between his jaws that day,
And to the East the good ship took her way.

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CAVALIERE SERVENTE

A lady laments the loss of her lover under the similitude of a lap-dog.

ALAS for me, who loved my bow-wow well!
So well I loved him that methought his heart
Would never from my beauty's rule depart,
And so, grown certain, grew insatiable.
Now hillward he has fled. I cannot tell
Whether Mussoorie's maids have fettered him,
Or whether Tara Deva, cloaked and dim,
Hears his devotions to another belle,
And other lips that answer tenderly.
Ah me, my bow-wow! I had taught thee skill;
With lore of ladies' hearts I dowered thee,
Whereon thou hast returned my favours ill,
And, breaking from my woven chain, art free,
Armed, at my hands, with all the darts that kill.

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DEPARTMENTAL DITTIES
1886–89

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PRELUDE

I have eaten your bread and salt,
I have drunk your water and wine;
The deaths ye died I have watched beside,
And the lives ye led were mine.

Was there aught that I did not share
In vigil or toil or ease—
One joy or woe that I did not know,
Dear hearts across the seas?

I have written the tale of our life
For a sheltered people's mirth,
In jesting guise—but ye are wise,
And ye know what the jest is worth!

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GENERAL SUMMARY

WE are very slightly changed
From the semi-apes who ranged
India's prehistoric clay;
Whoso drew the longest bow
Ran his brother down, you know,
As we run men down to-day.

"Dowb," the first of all his race,
Met the Mammoth face to face
On the lake or in the cave:
Stole the steadiest canoe,
Ate the quarry others slew,
Died—and took the finest grave.

When they scratched the reindeer-bone,
Some one made the sketch his own,
Filched it from the artist—then,
Even in those early days,
Won a simple Viceroy's praise
Through the toil of other men.

Ere they hewed the Sphinx's visage
Favouritism governed kissage,
Even as it does in this age.

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GENERAL SUMMARY

Who shall doubt the secret hid
Under Cheops' pyramid
Is that some contractor did
  Cheops out of several millions?
Or that Joseph's sudden rise
To Comptroller of Supplies
Was a fraud of monstrous size
  On King Pharaoh's swart Civilian?

Thus, the artless songs I sing
Do not deal with anything
  New or never said before.
As it was in the beginning
Is to-day official sinning,
  And shall be for evermore!

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ARMY HEADQUARTERS

Old is the song that I sing—
Old as my unpaid bills—
Old as the chicken that kitmutgars bring
Men at dak-bungalows—old as the Hills.

Ahasuerus Jenkins of the "Operatic Own"
Was dowered with a tenor voice of *super*-Santley tone.
His views on equitation were, perhaps, a trifle queer;
He had no seat worth mentioning, but oh! he had an ear.

He clubbed his wretched Company a dozen times a day,
He used to leave his charger in a parabolic way,
His method of saluting was the joy of all beholders,
But Ahasuerus Jenkins had a head upon his shoulders.

He took two months at Simla when the year was at the spring,
And underneath the deodars eternally did sing.
He warbled like a bulbul, but particularly at
Cornelia Agrippina, who was musical and fat.

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She controlled a humble husband, who, in turn, controlled a Dept.,
Where Cornelia Agrippina's human singing-birds were kept
From April to October on a plump retaining-fee,
Supplied, of course, *per mensem*, by the Indian Treasury.

Cornelia used to sing to him, and Jenkins used to play;
He praised unblushingly her notes, for he was false as they;
So when the winds of April turned the budding roses brown,
Cornelia told her husband: "Tom, you mustn't send him down!"

They haled him from his Regiment, which didn't much regret him;
They found for him an office-stool, and on that stool they set him,
To play with maps and catalogues three idle hours a day,
And draw his plump retaining-fee—which means his double pay.

Now, ever after dinner, when the coffee-cups are brought,
Ahasuerus waileth o'er the grand pianoforte;
And, thanks to fair Cornelia, his fame hath waxen great,
And Ahasuerus Jenkins is a power in the State!

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STUDY OF AN ELEVATION, IN INDIAN INK

This ditty is a string of lies,
But—how the deuce did Gubbins rise?

Potiphar Gubbins, C.E.,
Stands at the top of the tree;
And I muse in my bed on the reasons that led
To the hoisting of Potiphar G.

Potiphar Gubbins, C.E.,
Is seven years junior to Me;
Each bridge that he makes either buckles or breaks,
And his work is as rough as he.

Potiphar Gubbins, C.E.,
Is coarse as a chimpanzee;
And I can't understand why you gave him your hand,
Lovely Mehitabel Lee.

Potiphar Gubbins, C.E.,
Is dear to the Powers that Be;
For They bow and They smile in an affable style
Which is seldom accorded to Me.

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STUDY OF AN ELEVATION

Potiphar Gubbins, C.E.,
Is certain as certain can be
Of a highly paid post which is claimed by a host
Of seniors—including Me.

Careless and lazy is he,
Greatly inferior to Me.
What is the spell that you manage so well,
Commonplace Potiphar G.?

Lovely Mehitabel Lee,
Let me inquire of thee,
Should I have riz to where Potiphar is
Hadst thou been mated to Me?

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DELILAH

We have another Viceroy now; those days are dead
and done
Of Delilah Aberyswith and depraved Ulysses Gunne.

Delilah Aberyswith was a lady—not too young—
With a perfect taste in dresses and a badly bitted
tongue,
With a thirst for information, and a greater thirst for
praise,
And a little house in Simla in the Prehistoric Days.

By reason of her marriage to a gentleman in power,
Delilah was acquainted with the gossip of the hour;
And many little secrets of a half-official kind
Were whispered to Delilah, and she bore them all
in mind.

She patronised extensively a man, Ulysses Gunne,
Whose mode of earning money was a low and shame-
ful one.
He wrote for divers papers, which, as everybody
knows,
Is worse than serving in a shop or scaring off the
crows.

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DELILAH

He praised her queenly beauty first; and, later on, he hinted
At the vastness of her intellect with compliment unstinted;
He went with her a-riding, and his love for her was such
That he lent her all his horses and—she galled them very much.

One day THEY brewed a secret of a fine financial sort;
It related to Appointments, to a Man and a Report.
'Twas almost worth the keeping (only seven people knew it),
So Gunne rose up to seek the truth and patiently ensue it.

It was a Viceroy's Secret, but—perhaps the wine was red—
Perhaps an Aged Councillor had lost his aged head—
Perhaps Delilah's eyes were bright, Delilah's whispers sweet—
The Aged Member told her what 'twere treason to repeat.

Ulysses went a-riding, and they talked of love and flowers;
Ulysses went a-calling, and he called for several hours;
Ulysses went a-waltzing, and Delilah helped him dance—
Ulysses let the waltzes go, and waited for his chance.

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DELILAH

The summer sun was setting, and the summer air was still;
The couple went a-walking in the shade of Summer Hill;
The wasteful sunset faded out in turkis-green and gold,
Ulysses pleaded softly, and . . . that bad Delilah told!

Next morn, a startled Empire learned the all-important News;
Next week, the Aged Councillor was shaking in his shoes;
Next month, I met Delilah, and she did not show the least
Hesitation in asserting that Ulysses was a "beast."

. . . . . .

We have another Viceroy now, those days are dead and done—
Off, Delilah Aberyswith and most mean Ulysses Gunne!

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A LEGEND OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE

This is the reason why Rustum Beg,
Rajah of Kolazai,
Drinketh the "simpkin" and brandy peg,
Maketh the money to fly,
Vexeth a Government, tender and kind,
Also—but this is a detail—blind.

Rustum Beg of Kolazai—slightly backward Native State—
Lusted for a C.S.I.—so began to sanitate.
Built a Jail and Hospital—nearly built a City drain—
Till his faithful subjects all thought their ruler was insane.

Strange departures made he then—yea, Departments stranger still;
Half a dozen Englishmen helped the Rajah with a will,
Talked of noble aims and high, hinted of a future fine
For the State of Kolazai, on a strictly Western line.

Rajah Rustum held his peace; lowered octroi dues one half;
Organised a State Police; purified the Civil Staff;
Settled cess and tax afresh in a very liberal way;
Cut temptations of the flesh—also cut the Bukhshi's pay;

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A LEGEND OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE

Roused his Secretariat to a fine Mahratta fury,
By an order hinting at supervision of *dasturi;*
Turned the State of Kolazai very nearly upside-down;
When the end of May was nigh waited his achievement crown.

Then the Birthday honours came. Sad to state and sad to see,
Stood against the Rajah's name nothing more than *C.I.E.!*

. . . . . .

Things were lively for a week in the State of Kolazai,
Even now the people speak of that time regretfully;

How he disendowed the Jail—stopped at once the City drain;
Turned to beauty fair and frail—got his senses back again;
Doubled taxes, cesses all; cleared away each new-built *thana;*
Turned the two-lakh Hospital into a superb Zenana;

Heaped upon the Bukhshi Sahib wealth and honours manifold;
Clad himself in Eastern garb—squeezed his people as of old.
Happy, happy Kolazai! Never more will Rustum Beg
Play to catch the Viceroy's eye. He prefers the "simpkin" peg.

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THE STORY OF URIAH

"Now there were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor."

JACK BARRETT went to Quetta
  Because they told him to.
He left his wife at Simla
  On three fourths his monthly screw.
Jack Barrett died at Quetta
  Ere the next month's pay he drew.

Jack Barrett went to Quetta;
  He didn't understand
The reason of his transfer
  From the pleasant mountain-land:
The season was September,
  And it killed him out of hand.

Jack Barrett went to Quetta
  And there gave up the ghost,
Attempting two men's duty
  In that very healthy post;
And Mrs. Barrett mourned for him
  Five lively months at most.

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THE STORY OF URIAH

Jack Barrett's bones at Quetta
  Enjoy profound repose;
But I shouldn't be astonished
  If now his spirit knows
The reason of his transfer
  From the Himalayan snows.

And when the Last Great Bugle-Call
  Adown the Hurnai throbs,
When the last grim joke is entered
  In the big black Book of Jobs,
And Quetta graveyards give again
  Their victims to the air,
I should not like to be the man
  Who sent Jack Barrett there.

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LUCIFER

THINK not, O thou from College late deported,
Pride goeth down
Among thy seniors—yea, though thou hast sported
The B.A.'s gown,
And on thy Card the magic letters stand
Which stamp thee of the Rulers of the Land.

St. Vincent Clare's Papa had lived before him,—
Which always helps,—
So early in official life They bore him
From fellow-whelps,
Destined to die or sicken in the slough
Of Lower India, to the Mountain's brow.

No fairy-land is Capua—still, 'tis better
Than other lands.
St. Vincent licked the stamp and signed the letter,
And bound the bands
Of that foul, frail Red Tape which strangles ever
The honest, energetic fool's endeavour.

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So prospered greatly and forgat his father—
Thereafter, big
With his own merits, grew to be a rather
Conceited prig.
Facile the downward path, O Clare! The Gods
Saw and prepared for him their briniest rods.

"He is a c–d," They murmured vexed and low;
Yet said in love:
"No matter; give the boy another show;
He may improve." . . .
"He is impossible." The fiat went
Forth not so quickly as St. Clare's descent.

Cast out and doubly damned by that black epithet,
He sought the Plains;
And now behind his door, whoe'er so tappeth it,
Another reigns:
While Vincent, as the punkah flickers o'er him,
Remembers—that his father lived before him.

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THE POST THAT FITTED

Though tangled and twisted the course of true love,
This ditty explains
No tangle's so tangled it cannot improve
If the Lover has brains.

Ere the steamer bore him Eastward, Sleary was engaged to marry
An attractive girl at Tunbridge, whom he called "my little Carrie."
Sleary's pay was very modest; Sleary was the other way.
Who can cook a two-plate dinner on eight paltry dibs a day?

Long he pondered o'er the question in his scantly furnished quarters—
Then proposed to Minnie Boffkin, eldest of Judge Boffkin's daughters.
Certainly an impecunious Subaltern was not a catch,
But the Boffkins knew that Minnie mightn't make another match.

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So they recognised the business, and, to feed and
clothe the bride,
Got him made a Something-Something somewhere on
the Bombay side.
Anyhow, the billet carried pay enough for him to
marry—
As the artless Sleary put it: "Just the thing for me
and Carrie."

Did he, therefore, jilt Miss Boffkin—impulse of a
baser mind?
No! He started epileptic fits of an appalling kind.
(Of his *modus operandi* only this much I could
gather:
"Pears's shaving-sticks will give you little taste and
lots of lather.")

Frequently in public places his affliction used to smite
Sleary with distressing vigour—always in the Boffkins'
sight.
Ere a week was over Minnie weepingly returned his
ring,
Told him his "unhappy weakness" stopped all
thought of marrying.

Sleary bore the information with a chastened, holy
joy—
(Epileptic fits don't matter in Political employ)—
Wired three short words to Carrie—took his ticket,
packed his kit—
Bade farewell to Minnie Boffkin in one last, long,
lingering fit.

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Four weeks later, Carrie Sleary read—and laughed
until she wept—
Mrs. Boffkin's warning letter on the "wretched
epilept."

. . . . . .

Year by year, in pious patience, vengeful Mrs. Boff-
kin sits
Waiting for the Sleary babies to develop Sleary's fits.

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A CODE OF MORALS

Lest you should think this story true,
I merely mention I
Evolved it lately. 'Tis a most
Unmitigated misstatement.

Now Jones had left his new-wed bride to keep his
house in order,
And hied away to the Hurrum Hills above the Afghan
border,
To sit on a rock with a heliograph; but ere he left he
taught
His wife the working of the Code that sets the miles
at naught.

And Love had made him very sage, as Nature made
her fair;
So Cupid and Apollo linked, *per* heliograph, the pair.
At dawn, across the Hurrum Hills he flashed her
counsel wise—
At e'en, the dying sunset bore her husband's homilies.

He warned her 'gainst seductive youths in scarlet
clad and gold,
As much as 'gainst the blandishments paternal of
the old;

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But kept his gravest warnings for (hereby my ditty hangs)
That snowy-haired Lothario, Lieutenant-General Bangs.

'Twas General Bangs, with Aide and Staff, that tittupped on the way,
When they beheld a heliograph tempestuously at play.
They thought of Border risings, and of stations sacked and burned—
So stopped to take the message down—and this is what they learned:

"Dash dot dot, dot, dot dash, dot dash dot," twice.
The General swore: "Was ever General Officer addressed as 'dear' before?
'My Love,' i' faith! 'My Duck,' Gadzooks! 'My darling popsy-wop'!
Spirit of great Lord Wolseley, *who* is on that mountain-top?"

The artless Aide-de-camp was mute, the gilded Staff were still,
As, dumb with pent-up mirth, they booked that message from the hill,
Where, clear as summer-lightning flare, the husband's warning ran:
"Don't dance or ride with General Bangs—a most immoral man."

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A CODE OF MORALS

(At dawn across the Hurrum Hills he flashed her
counsel wise—
But, howsoever Love be blind, the world at large
hath eyes.)
With damnatory dot and dash he heliographed his
wife
Some interesting details of the General's private life.

The artless Aide-de-camp was mute; the shining
Staff were still,
And red and ever redder grew the General's shaven
gill.
And this is what he said at last (his feelings matter
not):
"I think we've tapped a private line. Hi! Threes
about there! Trot!"

All honour unto Bangs, for ne'er did Jones thereafter
know
By word or act official who read off that helio;
But the tale is on the Frontier, and from Michni to
Mool*tan*
They know the worthy General as "that most im-
moral man."

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PUBLIC WASTE

Walpole talks of "a man and his price,"
List to a ditty queer—
The sale of a Deputy-Acting-Vice-
Resident-Engineer
Bought like a bullock, hoof and hide,
By the Little Tin Gods on the Mountain-side.

By the laws of the Family Circle 'tis written in letters of brass
That only a Colonel from Chatham can manage the Railways of State,
Because of the gold on his breeks, and the subjects wherein he must pass;
Because in all matters that deal not with Railways his knowledge is great.

Now, Exeter Battleby Tring had laboured from boyhood to eld
On the Lines of the East and the West, likewise of the North and South;
Many lines had he built and surveyed—important the posts which he held;
And the Lords of the Iron Horse were dumb when he opened his mouth.

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Black as the raven his garb, and his heresies jettier still—
Hinting that Railways required lifetimes of study and knowledge;
Never clanked sword by his side—Vauban he knew not, nor drill—
Nor was his name on the list of men who had passed through the "College."

Wherefore the Little Tin Gods harried their little tin souls,
Seeing he came not from Chatham, jingled no spurs at his heels,
Knowing that, nevertheless, was he first on the Government rolls
For the billet of "Railway Instructor to Little Tin Gods on Wheels."

Letters not seldom they wrote him, "having the honour to state,"
It would be better for all men if he were laid on the shelf:
Much would accrue to his bank-book an he consented to wait
Until the Little Tin Gods built him a berth for himself.

"Special, well paid, and exempt from the Law of the Fifty-and-Five,
Even to Ninety-and-Nine"—these were the terms of the pact:

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Thus did the Little Tin Gods (long may Their Highnesses thrive!)
Silence his mouth with rupees, keeping their Circle intact;

Appointing a Colonel from Chatham who managed the Bhamo State Line
(The which was one mile and one furlong—a guaranteed twenty-inch gauge).
So Exeter Battleby Tring consented his claims to resign,
And died, on four thousand a month, in the ninetieth year of his age!

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WHAT HAPPENED

HURREE CHUNDER MOOKERJEE, pride of Bow
Bazaar,
Owner of a native press, "Barrishter-at-Lar,"
Waited on the Government with a claim to wear
Sabres by the bucketful, rifles by the pair.

Then the Indian Government winked a wicked wink,
Said to Chunder Mookerjee: "Stick to pen and ink;
They are safer implements: but, if you insist,
We will let you carry arms wheresoe'er you list."

Hurree Chunder Mookerjee sought the gunsmith and
Bought the tubes of Lancaster, Ballard, Dean, and
Bland,
Bought a shiny bowie-knife, bought a town-made
sword—
Jingled like a carriage-horse when he went abroad.

But the Indian Government, always keen to please,
Also gave permission to horrid men like these—
Yar Mohammed Yusufzai, down to kill or steal;
Chimbu Singh from Bikaneer, Tantia the Bhil;

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WHAT HAPPENED

Killar Khan the Marri chief, Jowar Singh the Sikh,
Nubbee Baksh Punjabi Jat, Abdul Huq Rafiq—
He was a Wahabi; last, little Boh Hla-oo
Took advantage of the Act—took a Snider too.

They were unenlightened men—Ballard knew them not;
They procured their swords and guns chiefly on the spot,
And the lore of centuries, plus a hundred fights,
Made them slow to disregard one another's rights.

With a unanimity dear to patriot hearts
All those hairy gentlemen out of foreign parts
Said: "The good old days are back—let us go to war!"
Swaggered down the Grand Trunk Road into Bow Bazaar.

Nubbee Baksh Punjabi Jat found a hide-bound flail;
Chimbu Singh from Bikaneer oiled his Tonk *jezail;*
Yar Mohammed Yusufzai spat and grinned with glee
As he ground the butcher-knife of the Khyberee.

Jowar Singh the Sikh procured sabre, quoit, and mace;
Abdul Huq, Wahabi, took his dagger from its place;
While amid the jungle-grass danced and grinned and jabbered
Little Boh Hla-oo and cleared his *dah*-blade from the scabbard.

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WHAT HAPPENED

What became of Mookerjee? Soothly, who can say?
Yar Mohammed only grins in a nasty way,
Jowar Singh is reticent, Chimbu Singh is mute;
But the belts of all of them simply bulge with loot!

What became of Ballard's guns? Afghans black and grubby
Sell them for their silver-weight to the men of Pubbi;
And the shiny bowie-knife and the town-made sword are
Hanging in a Marri camp just across the Border.

What became of Mookerjee? Ask Mohammed Yar
Prodding Siva's sacred bull down the Bow Bazaar.
Speak to placid Nubbee Baksh—question land and sea—
Ask the Indian Congress men—only don't ask me!

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THE MAN WHO COULD WRITE

Shun—shun the Bowl! That fatal, facile drink
Has ruined many geese who dipped their quills in't,
Bribe, murder, marry, but steer clear of Ink
Save when you write receipts for paid-up bills in't.
There may be silver in the "blue-black"—all
I know of is the Iron and the Gall.

Boanerges Blitzen, servant of the Queen,
Is a dismal failure—is a Might-have-been.
In a luckless moment he discovered men
Rise to high position through a ready pen.

Boanerges Blitzen argued therefore: "I,
With the selfsame weapon, can attain as high."
Only he did not possess, when he made the trial,
Wicked wit of C–lv–n, irony of L—l.

(Men who spar with Government need, to back their blows,
Something more than ordinary journalistic prose.)

Never young Civilian's prospects were so bright,
Till an Indian paper found that he could write:
Never young Civilian's prospects were so dark
When the wretched Blitzen wrote to make his mark.

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THE MAN WHO COULD WRITE

Certainly he scored it, bold, and black, and firm—
In that Indian paper made his seniors squirm—
Quoted office scandals, wrote the tactless truth.
Was there ever known a more misguided youth?

When the Indian paper praised his plucky game,
Boanerges Blitzen felt that this was fame:
When the men he wrote of shook their heads and swore,
Boanerges Blitzen only wrote the more;

Posed as Young Ithuriel, resolute and grim,
Till he found promotion didn't come to him;
Till he found that reprimands weekly were his lot,
And his many Districts curiously hot.

Till he found his furlough strangely hard to win,
Boanerges Blitzen didn't care a pin:
Then it seemed to dawn on him something wasn't right—
Boanerges Blitzen put it down to "spite."

Languished in a District desolate and dry;
Watched the Local Government yearly pass him by;
Wondered where the hitch was; called it most unfair.
. . . . . .
That was seven years ago—and he still is there.

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PINK DOMINOES

"They are fools who kiss and tell"—
Wisely has the poet sung.
Man may hold all sorts of posts
If he'll only hold his tongue.

Jenny and Me were engaged, you see,
On the eve of the Fancy Ball;
So a kiss or two was nothing to you
Or any one else at all.

Jenny would go in a domino—
Pretty and pink but warm;
While I attended, clad in a splendid
Austrian uniform.

Now, we had arranged, through notes exchanged
Early that afternoon,
At Number Four to waltz no more,
But to sit in the dusk and spoon.

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PINK DOMINOES

(I wish you to see that Jenny and Me
  Had barely exchanged our troth;
So a kiss or two was strictly due
  By, from, and between us both.)

When Three was over, an eager lover,
  I fled to the gloom outside;
And a domino came out also
  Whom I took for my future bride.

That is to say, in a casual way
  I slipped my arm around her,
With a kiss or two (which is nothing to you),
  And ready to kiss I found her.

•

She turned her head and the name she said
  Was certainly not my own;
But ere I could speak, with a smothered shriek
  She fled and left me alone.

Then Jenny came, and I saw with shame
  She'd doffed her domino;
And I had embraced a stranger's waist—
  But I did not tell her so.

Next morn I knew that there were two
  Dominoes pink, and one
Had cloaked the spouse of Sir Julian Vouse,
  Our big Political gun.

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PINK DOMINOES

Sir J. was old, and her hair was gold,
And her eyes were a blue cerulean;
And the name she said when she turned her head
Was not in the least like "Julian."

Now wasn't it nice, when want of *pice*
Forbade us twain to marry,
That old Sir J., in the kindest way,
Made me his Secre*tarry?*

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THE MAN AND THE SHADOW

If it were mine to choose
A single gift from Fate,
I would not ask for Rank or Fame,
I would not seek a knighted name—
Give me, for office use,
One good subordinate.

Up the steep Official Stair
With rapidity amazing
Clomb, his seniors bedazing,
Into Heights of Glory blazing,
With the Stars that mortals wear
On their dress-coat breasts at Levées,
Hastings Clive Macaulay Bevys.

And they stood below and cursed—
All the Juniors of his calling—
With a fluency appalling,
Betting on his chance of falling;
Prayed to see the bubble burst
Of the reputation first-class
Of this Idler of the worst class.

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In his office, scorned of all,
Saddle-hued, grotesque of feature,
Worked a weird, bi-racial creature,
Far too humble-souled to meet your
Eye—Concepcion Gabral;
Santu Ribiera Paul
Luz Concepcion Gabral.

This I know, and this is all:
For his labours unremitting
Came a recompense befitting
Bevys, *plus* a well-paid flitting
Into Burmahorbengal;
But Concepcion, the able,
Stirred not from the office-table.

This I know, and this is all:
There were hints unfit for hinting,
There was speech unfit for printing,
There were protests without stinting,
Heard in Burmahorbengal—
Crudely, nudely, rudely, rawly
Saying, "Take back this Macaulay."

In the brutal, bitter wit
Much affected east of Suez,
Where the Englishman so few is,
And a man must work or rue his
Incapacity and quit,
Fell innumerable bastings
Upon Clive Macaulay Hastings.

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THE MAN AND THE SHADOW

With the Hand of Common Sense
On the Waistband of Despair, they
Raised that ruler high in air, they
Stripped him miserably bare, they
On the soft flesh of Pretence
In the face of India smacked him,
Then, as shop-boys say, they "sacked" him.

You may find him still to-day
'Twixt Peshawur and Colaba,
Derelict without a harbour,
A civilian Micawber
(Spare the rhyme who read the lay!)
In "officiating" fetters,
Doing duty for his betters.

And—oh, irony supreme!
All the Gods who rule the Nation
Have withheld the explanation
Of his open degradation
From the man they justly deem
An administrative novice
Trusting blindly to his office.

This I know, and this is all
(*He* is ignorant as ever)
And if Fate decrees he never
Meet again the humble, clever
Quick-to-grasp-ideas Gabral
Sure am I his end, alas!
Will be madness or—Madras.

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MUNICIPAL

"Why is my District death-rate low?"
Said Binks of Hezabad.
"Wells, drains, and sewage-outfalls are
My own peculiar fad.
I learned a lesson once. It ran
Thus," quoth that most veracious man:

"It was an August evening, and, in snowy garments clad,
I paid a round of visits in the lines of Hezabad;
When, presently, my Waler saw, and did not like at all,
A Commissariat elephant careering down the Mall.

"I couldn't see the driver, and across my mind it rushed
That that Commissariat elephant had suddenly gone *musth.*
I didn't care to meet him, and I couldn't well get down,
So I let the Waler have it, and we headed for the town.

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"The buggy was a new one, and, praise Dykes, it stood the strain
Till the Waler jumped a bullock just above the City Drain;
And the next that I remember was a hurricane of squeals,
And the creature making toothpicks of my five-foot patent wheels.

"He seemed to want the owner, so I fled, distraught with fear,
To the Main Drain sewage-outfall, where he snorted in my ear—
Reached the four-foot drain-head safely, and, in darkness and despair,
Felt the brute's proboscis fingering my terror-stiffened hair.

"Heard it trumpet on my shoulder—tried to crawl a little higher—
Found the Main Drain sewage-outfall blocked, some eight feet up, with mire;
And, for twenty reeking minutes, sir, my very marrow froze,
While the trunk was feeling blindly for a purchase on my toes!

"It missed me by a fraction, but my hair was turning grey
Before they called the drivers up and dragged the brute away.

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Then I sought the City Elders, and my words were very plain.
They flushed that four-foot drain-head and—it never choked again.

"You may hold with surface-drainage, and the sun-for-garbage cure,
Till you've been a periwinkle shrinking coyly up a sewer.
I believe in well-flushed culverts. . . .
This is why the death-rate's small;
And, if you don't believe me, get *shikarred* yourself That's all."

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THE LAST DEPARTMENT

Twelve hundred million men are spread
About this Earth, and I and You
Wonder, when You and I are dead,
What will those luckless millions do?

"None whole or clean," we cry, "or free from stain
Of favour." Wait awhile, till we attain
The Last Department where nor fraud nor fools,
Nor grade nor greed, shall trouble us again.

Fear, Favour, or Affection—what are these
To the grim Head who claims our services?
I never knew a wife or interest yet
Delay that *pukka* step, miscalled "decease";

When leave, long overdue, none can deny,
When idleness of all Eternity
Becomes our furlough, and the marigold
Our thriftless, bullion-minting Treasury.

Transferred to the Eternal Settlement,
Each in his strait, wood-scantled office pent,
No longer Brown reverses Smith's appeals,
Or Jones records his Minute of Dissent.

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And One, long since a pillar of the Court,
As mud between the beams thereof is wrought;
  And One who wrote on phosphates for the crops
Is subject-matter of his own Report.

These be the glorious ends whereto we pass.
Let Him who Is, go call on Him who Was,
  And He shall see the *mallie* steals the slab
For currie-grinder, and for goats the grass.)

A breath of wind, a Border bullet's flight,
A draught of water, or a horse's fright—
  The droning of the fat *Sheristadar*
Ceases, the punkah stops, and falls the night

For You or Me. Do those who live decline
The step that offers, or their work resign?
  Trust me, To-day's Most Indispensables,
Five hundred men can take your place or mine.

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OTHER VERSES

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MY RIVAL

I GO to concert, party, ball—
What profit is in these?
I sit alone against the wall,
And strive to look at ease.
The incense that is mine by right
They burn before Her shrine;
And that's because I'm seventeen
And she is forty-nine.

I cannot check my girlish blush,
My colour comes and goes;
I redden to my finger-tips,
And sometimes to my nose;
But She is white where white should be
And red where red should shine—
The blush that flies at seventeen
Is fixed at forty-nine.

I wish *I* had Her constant cheek:
I wish that I could sing
All sorts of funny little songs,
Not quite the proper thing.

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MY RIVAL

I'm very gauche and very shy;
  Her jokes aren't in my line;
And, worst of all, I'm seventeen,
  While She is forty-nine.

The young men come, the young men go,
  Each pink and white and neat,
She's older than their mothers, but
  They grovel at Her feet;
They walk beside Her '*rickshaw*-wheels—
  They never walk by mine;
And that's because I'm seventeen
  And She is forty-nine.

She rides with half a dozen men
  (She calls them "boys" and "mashers");
I trot along the Mall alone.
  My prettiest frocks and sashes
Don't help to fill my programme-card,
  And vainly I repine
From 10 to 2 A.M. Ah me!
  Would I were forty-nine!

She calls me "darling," "pet," and "dear,"
  And "sweet retiring maid."
I'm always at the back, I know;
  She puts me in the shade.
She introduces me to men,
  "Cast" lovers, I opine,
For sixty takes to seventeen,
  Nineteen to forty-nine.

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But even She must older grow
  And end Her dancing days;
She can't go on for ever so
  At concerts, balls, and plays!
One ray of priceless hope I see
  Before my footsteps shine:
Just think that She'll be eighty-one
  When I am forty-nine!

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TO THE UNKNOWN GODDESS

WILL you conquer my heart with your beauty, my soul going out from afar?
Shall I fall to your hand as a victim of crafty and cautious *shikar?*

Have I met you and passed you already, unknowing, unthinking, and blind?
Shall I meet you next season at Simla, O sweetest and best of your kind?

Does the P. and O. bear you to meward, or, clad in short frocks in the West,
Are you growing the charms that shall capture and torture the heart in my breast?

Will you stay in the Plains till September—my passion as warm as the day?
Will you bring me to book on the Mountains, or where the thermantidotes play?

When the light of your eyes shall make pallid the mean lesser lights I pursue,
And the charm of your presence shall lure me from love of the gay "thirteen-two";

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TO THE UNKNOWN GODDESS

When the peg and the pigskin shall please not; when
I buy me Calcutta-built clothes;
When I quit the Delight of Wild Asses; forswearing
the swearing of oaths;

As a deer to the hand of the hunter when I turn 'mid
the gibes of my friends—
When the days of my freedom are numbered, and the
life of the bachelor ends.

Ah, Goddess!—child, spinster, or widow,—as of old
on Mars Hill when they raised
To the God that they knew not an altar—so I, a
young Pagan, have praised

The Goddess I know not nor worship; yet, if half
that men tell me be true,
You will come in the future, and therefore the verses
are written to you!

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THE RUPAIYAT OF OMAR KAL'VIN

Allowing for the difference 'twixt prose and rhymed exaggeration, this ought to reproduce the sense of what Sir A—— told the nation some time ago, when the Government struck from our incomes two per cent.

NOW the New Year, reviving last Year's Debt,
The thoughtful Fisher casteth wide his Net;
  So I with begging Dish and ready Tongue
Assail all Men for all that I can get.

Imports indeed are gone with all their Dues—
Lo! Salt a Lever that I dare not use;
  Nor may I ask the Tillers in Bengal.
Surely my Kith and Kin will not refuse

Pay—and I promise by the Dust of Spring,
Retrenchment. If my promises can bring
  Comfort, Ye have them now a thousandfold—
By Allah! I will promise Anything!

Indeed, indeed, Retrenchment oft before
I swore—but did I mean it when I swore?
  And then, and then, We wandered to the Hills,
And so the Little Less became Much More.

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THE RUPAIYAT OF OMAR KAL'VIN

Whether at Boileaugunge or Babylon,
I know not how the wretched Thing is done,
  The Items of Receipt grow surely small,
The Items of Expense mount one by one.

I cannot help it. What have I to do
With One and Five, or Four, or Three, or Two?
  Let Scribes spit Blood and Sulphur as they please,
Or Statesmen call me foolish—heed not you.

Behold, I promise—Anything You will.
Behold, I greet you with an empty Till—
  Ah! Fellow-Sinners, of your Charity
Seek not the Reason of the Dearth, but fill.

For if I sinned and fell, where lies the Gain
Of Knowledge? Would it ease you of your Pain
  To know the tangled Threads of Revenue,
I ravel deeper in a hopeless Skein?

"Who hath not Prudence"—what was it I said
Of Her who paints her Eyes and tires Her Head,
  And gibes and mocks the People in the Street,
And fawns upon them for Her thriftless Bread?

Accursèd is She of Eve's daughters—She
Hath cast off Prudence, and Her End shall be
  Destruction. . . . Brethren, of your Bounty grant
Some Portion of your daily Bread to *Me!*

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PAGETT, M.P.

The toad beneath the harrow knows
Exactly where each tooth-point goes;
The butterfly upon the road
Preaches contentment to that toad.

Pagett, M.P., was a liar, and a fluent liar therewith—
He spoke of the heat of India as the "Asian Solar Myth";
Came on a four months' visit, to "study the East," in November,
And I got him to sign an agreement vowing to stay till September.

March came in with the *köil*. Pagett was cool and gay—
Called me a "bloated Brahman," talked of my "princely pay."
March went out with the roses. "Where is your heat?" said he.
"Coming," said I to Pagett. "Skittles!" said Pagett, M.P.

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April opened with punkahs, coolies, and prickly-heat—
Pagett was dear to mosquitoes, sand-flies found him a treat.
He grew speckled and lumpy—hammered, I grieve to say,
Aryan brothers who fanned him, in an illiberal way.

May set in with a dust-storm—Pagett went down with the sun.
All the delights of the season tickled him one by one.
Imprimis, ten days' "liver"—due to his drinking beer;
Later, a dose of fever—slight, but he called it severe.

Dysent'ry touched him in June, after the *Chota Bursat*—
Lowered his portly person, made him yearn to depart.
He didn't call me a "Brahman," or "bloated," or "overpaid,"
But seemed to think it a wonder that any one ever stayed.

July was a trifle unhealthy—Pagett was ill with fear;
Called it the "Cholera Morbus," hinted that life was dear.
He babbled of "Eastern exile," and mentioned his home with tears;
But I hadn't seen *my* children for close upon seven years.

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We reached a hundred and twenty once in the Court at noon
(I've mentioned Pagett was portly)—Pagett went off in a swoon.
That was an end to the business; Pagett, the perjured, fled
With a practical, working knowledge of "Solar Myths" in his head.

And I laughed as I drove from the station, but the mirth died out on my lips
As I thought of the fools like Pagett who write of their "Eastern trips,"
And the sneers of the travelled idiots who duly misgovern the land,
And I prayed to the Lord to deliver another one into my hand.

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LA NUIT BLANCHE

A much-discerning Public hold
The Singer generally sings
Of personal and private things,
And prints and sells his past for gold.

Whatever I may here disclaim,
The very clever folk I sing to
Will most indubitably cling to
Their pet delusion, just the same.

I had seen, as dawn was breaking
And I staggered to my rest,
Tara Devi softly shaking
From the Cart Road to the crest.
I had seen the spurs of Jakko
Heave and quiver, swell and sink;
Was it Earthquake or tobacco,
Day of Doom or Night of Drink?

In the full, fresh, fragrant morning
I observed a camel crawl,
Laws of gravitation scorning,
On the ceiling and the wall;

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LA NUIT BLANCHE

Then I watched a fender walking,
And I heard grey leeches sing,
And a red-hot monkey talking
Did not seem the proper thing.

Then a Creature, skinned and crimson,
Ran about the floor and cried,
And they said I had the "jims" on,
And they dosed me with bromide,
And they locked me in my bedroom—
Me and one wee Blood-Red Mouse—
Though I said:—"To give my head room
You had best unroof the house."

But my words were all unheeded,
Though I told the grave M.D.
That the treatment really needed
Was a dip in open sea
That was lapping just below me,
Smooth as silver, white as snow,
And it took three men to throw me
When I found I could not go.

Half the night I watched the heavens
Fizz like '81 champagne—
Fly to sixes and to sevens,
Wheel and thunder back again;
And when all was peace and order
Save one planet nailed askew,
Much I wept because my warder
Would not let me set it true.

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LA NUIT BLANCHE

After frenzied hours of waiting,
When the Earth and Skies were dumb,
Pealed an awful voice dictating
An interminable sum,
Changing to a tangled story—
"What she said you said I said"—
Till the Moon arose in glory,
And I found her . . . in my head.

Then a Face came, blind and weeping,
And It couldn't wipe Its eyes,
And It muttered I was keeping
Back the moonlight from the skies;
So I patted It for pity,
But It whistled shrill with wrath,
And a huge, black Devil City
Poured its peoples on my path.

So I fled with steps uncertain
On a thousand-year-long race,
But the bellying of the curtain
Kept me always in one place;
While the tumult rose and maddened
To the roar of Earth on fire,
Ere it ebbed and sank and saddened
To a whisper tense as wire.

In intolerable stillness
Rose one little, little star,
And it chuckled at my illness,
And it mocked me from afar;

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And its brethren came and eyed me,
  Called the Universe to aid,
Till I lay, with naught to hide me,
  'Neath the Scorn of all Things Made.

Dun and saffron, robed and splendid,
  Broke the solemn, pitying Day,
And I knew my pains were ended,
  And I turned and tried to pray;
But my speech was shattered wholly,
  And I wept as children weep,
Till the dawn-wind, softly, slowly,
  Brought to burning eyelids sleep.

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THE LOVERS' LITANY

EYES of grey—the sodden quay,
  Driving rain and falling tears,
As the steamer heads to sea
  In a parting storm of cheers.
    Sing, for Faith and Hope are high—
    None so true as you and I—
    Sing the Lovers' Litany:—
    "*Love like ours can never die!*"

Eyes of black—the throbbing keel,
  Milky foam to left and right;
Little whispers near the wheel
  In the brilliant tropic night.
    Cross that rules the Southern Sky,
    Stars that sweep, and wheel, and fly,
    Hear the Lovers' Litany:—
    "*Love like ours can never die!*"

Eyes of brown—the dusty plain
  Split and parched with heat of June.
Flying hoof and tightened rein,
  Hearts that beat the old, old tune.

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THE LOVERS' LITANY

Neck-and-neck the horses fly,
Frame we now the old reply
Of the Lovers' Litany:—
"*Love like ours can never die!*"

Eyes of blue—the Simla Hills
Silvered with the moonlight hoar;
Pleading of the waltz that thrills,
Dies and echoes round Benmore.
"*Mabel*," "*Officers*," "*Good-bye*,"
Glamour, wine, and witchery—
On my soul's sincerity,
"*Love like ours can never die!*"

Maidens, of your charity,
Pity my most luckless state.
Four times Cupid's debtor I—
Bankrupt in quadruplicate.
Yet, despite my evil case,
An a maiden showed me grace,
Four-and-forty times would I
Sing the Lovers' Litany:—
"*Love like ours can never die!*"

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A BALLAD OF BURIAL

"St. Praxed's ever was the Church for peace."

If down here I chance to die,
Solemnly I beg you take
All that then is left of "I"
To the Hills for old sake's sake.
Pack, and pack me thoroughly,
In the ice that used to slake
Drinks I drank when I was dry—
This observe for old sake's sake.

To the railway-station hie,
There a single ticket take
For Umballa—goods-train; I
Shall not mind delay or shake.
I shall rest contentedly,
Spite of clamour coolies make;
Thus in frozen dignity
Send me up for old sake's sake.

Next the sleepy Babu wake,
Book a Kalka van "for four."
Few, I think, will care to make
Journeys with me any more

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A BALLAD OF BURIAL

As they used to do of yore.
I shall need a "special" break—
Thing I never took before—
Get me one for old sake's sake.

After that—arrangements make;
No hotel will take me in,
And a bullock's back would break
'Neath the teak and leaden skin.
Tonga ropes are frail and thin,
Or, did I a back seat take,
In a tonga I might spin—
Do your best for old sake's sake.

After that—your work is done.
Recollect a Padre must
Mourn the dear departed one—
Throw the ashes and the dust.
Don't go down at once. I trust
You will find excuse to "snake
Three days' casual on the bust"—
Get your fun for old sake's sake.

I could never stand the Plains.
Think of blazing June and May,
Think of those September rains
Yearly till the Judgment Day!
I should never rest in peace;
I should sweat and lie awake.
Rail me, then, on my decease,
To the Hills for old sake's sake.

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A LEVÉE IN THE PLAINS

COME here, ye lasses av swate Parnassis!
  Kape cool me hid while me pen recalls
That night av tormint whan all Lahore wint
  To honour the Quane an' our great Sorr Charles.

There was music brayin' an' punkahs swayin',
  An' men dishplayin' their uniform;
An' the native ginthry they thronged the inthry;
  An' oh, by Jabers! 'twas powerful warm!

There was Colonels more there than I could score there,
  In white an' khaki an' knots an' bows;
An' the bowld Civilians they came in millions,
  Meltin' away under toight dress-clo'es.

There was gowld in plastrons on epigastrons,
  An' stand-up collars that lay down flat;
An' the Doctors splindid, wid swords attinded,
  An' hearse-plumes wavin' above their hat.

The whole Punjab there, in sum'shus garb there,
  Paraded grandly the Aujence Hall;
An' the *Shubadars*, wid their midals and shtars,
  Stood up to attintion forninst the wall.

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A LEVÉE IN THE PLAINS

Thin spurs were scratchin' an' sword-belts catchin'
  As they let the batch in at ten-fiftane,
An' we stud perspirin' wid zeal ontirin'
  To the greater glory av England's Quane.

But oh! the dignity, the moild benignity,
  Whan the Chief Coort Judges tuk the flure;
A standin' sinthry in the private inthry,
  An' watchin' the rest av us march before.

So some bowed nately, an' some too stately,
  An' some went noddin' aisy an' free;
An' some went trippin', and some went skippin',
  But all went dhrippin' through the big Levee.

Thin down the stairway we ran for airway,
  An' tuk refreshments whan all was done;
Wid scabbards clinkin' an' men a-drinkin',
  An' the shtars a-winkin' to watch the fun.

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THE OVERLAND MAIL

(FOOT-SERVICE TO THE HILLS)

IN the Name of the Empress of India, make way,
O Lords of the Jungle, wherever you roam,
The woods are awake at the end of the day—
We exiles are waiting for letters from Home.
Let the robber retreat, and the tiger turn tail—
In the Name of the Empress, the Overland Mail!

With a jingle of bells as the dusk gathers in,
He turns to the foot-path that heads up the hill—
The bags on his back and a cloth round his chin,
And, tucked in his waist-belt, the Post Office bill:
"Despatched on this date, as received from the rail,
Per runner, two bags of the Overland Mail."

Is the torrent in spate? He must ford it or swim.
Has the rain wrecked the road? He must climb by the cliff.
Does the tempest cry halt? What are tempests to him?
The service admits not a "but" or an "if."

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While the breath's in his mouth, he must bear without fail,
In the Name of the Empress, the Overland Mail.

From aloe to rose-oak, from rose-oak to fir,
From level to upland, from upland to crest,
From rice-field to rock-ridge, from rock-ridge to spur,
Fly the soft-sandalled feet, strains the brawny brown chest;
From rail to ravine—to the peak from the vale—
Up, up through the night goes the Overland Mail.

There's a speck on the hillside, a dot on the road—
A jingle of bells on the foot-path below;
There's a scuffle above in the monkeys' abode—
The world is awake and the clouds are aglow.
For the great Sun himself must attend to the hail:
"In the Name of the Empress, the Overland Mail!"

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DIVIDED DESTINIES

IT was an artless *Bandar*, and he danced upon a pine,
And much I wondered how he lived, and where the beast might dine,
And many, many other things, till, o'er my morning smoke,
I slept the sleep of idleness and dreamed that *Bandar* spoke.

He said: "Oh, man of many clothes! Sad crawler on the Hills!
Observe, I know not Ranken's shop, nor Ranken's monthly bills!
I take no heed to trousers or the coats that you call dress;
Nor am I plagued with little cards for little drinks at Mess.

"I steal the *bunnia's* grain at morn, at noon and eventide
(For he is fat and I am spare), I roam the mountain-side,
I follow no man's carriage, and no, never in my life
Have I flirted at Peliti's with another *Bandar's* wife.

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"Oh, man of futile fopperies—unnecessary wraps;
I own no ponies in the Hills, I drive no tall-wheeled traps;
I buy me not twelve-button gloves, 'short-sixes' eke, or rings,
Nor do I waste at Hamilton's my wealth on pretty things.

"I quarrel with my wife at home, we never fight abroad;
But Mrs. B. has grasped the fact I am her only lord.
I never heard of fever—dumps nor debts depress my soul;
And I pity and despise you!" Here he pouched my breakfast-roll.

His hide was very mangy and his face was very red,
And undisguisedly he scratched with energy his head.
His manners were not always nice, but how my spirit cried
To be an artless *Bandar* loose upon the mountain-side!

So I answered: "Gentle *Bandar*, an inscrutable Decree
Makes thee a gleesome, fleasome Thou, and me a wretched Me.
Go! Depart in peace, my brother, to thy home amid the pine;
Yet forget not once a mortal wished to change his lot with thine."

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THE MASQUE OF PLENTY

Argument: The Indian Government, being minded to discover the economic condition of their lands, sent a Committee to inquire into it; and saw that it was good.

SCENE.—*The wooded heights of Simla. The Incarnation of the Government of India in the raiment of the Angel of Plenty sings, to pianoforte accompaniment.*

"How sweet is the shepherd's sweet life!
From the dawn to the even he strays—
He shall follow his sheep all the day
And his tongue shall be fillèd with praise.
(*adagio dim.*) Fillèd with praise!"

(*largendo con sp.*) Now this is the position,
Go make an inquisition
Into their real condition
As swiftly as ye may.
(*p.*) Ay, paint our swarthy billions
The richest of vermilions
Ere two well-led cotillions
Have danced themselves away.

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THE MASQUE OF PLENTY

TURKISH PATROL, *as able and intelligent Investigators wind down the Himalayas.*

What is the state of the Nation? What is its occupation?
Hi! get along, get along, get along—lend us the information!
(*dim.*) Census the *byle* and the *yabu*—capture a first-class Babu,
Set him to file Gazetteers—Gazetteers . . .
(*ff.*) What is the state of the Nation, etc.

INTERLUDE, *from Nowhere in Particular, to stringed and Oriental instruments.*

Our cattle reel beneath the yoke they bear—
The earth is iron and the skies are brass—
And faint with fervour of the flaming air
The languid hours pass.

Our wells are dry beneath the village tree—
The young wheat withers ere it reach a span,
And belts of blinding sand show cruelly
Where once the river ran.

Pray, brothers, pray, but to no earthly King—
Lift up your hands above the blighted grain,
Look westward—if They please, the Gods shall bring
Their mercy with the Rain.

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Look westward—bears the blue no brown cloud-bank?
Nay, it is written—wherefore should we fly?
On our own field and by our cattle's flank
Lie down, lie down to die!

SEMICHORUS.

By the plumed heads of Kings
Waving high,
Where the tall corn springs
O'er the dead.
If they rust or rot we die,
If they ripen we are fed.
Very mighty is the power of our Kings!

Triumphal return to Simla of the Investigators, attired after the manner of Dionysus, leading a pet tiger-cub in wreaths of rhubarb-leaves, symbolical of India under medical treatment. They sing:

We have seen, we have written—behold it, the proof of our manifold toil!
In their hosts they assembled and told it—the tale of the Sons of the Soil.
We have said of the Sickness, "Where is it?"—and of Death, "It is far from our ken";
We have paid a particular visit to the affluent children of men.

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THE MASQUE OF PLENTY

We have trodden the mart and the well-curb—we
have stooped to the bield and the byre;
And the King may the forces of Hell curb—for the
People have all they desire!

CASTANETS AND STEP-DANCE.

Oh, the *dom* and the *mag* and the *thakur* and the
thag,
And the *nat* and the *brinjaree*,
And the *bunnia* and the *ryot* are as happy and as quiet
And as plump as they can be!
Yea, the *jain* and the *jat* in his stucco-fronted hut,
And the bounding *bazugar*,
By the favour of the King, are as fat as anything,
They are—they are—they are!

RECITATIVE, *Government of India, with white-satin wings and electroplated harp.*

How beautiful upon the mountains, in peace reclin-
ing,
Thus to be assured that our people are unanimously
dining.
And though there are places not so blessed as others
in natural advantages, which, after all, was only
to be expected,
Proud and glad are we to congratulate you upon the
work you have thus ably effected.

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THE MASQUE OF PLENTY

CHORUS OF THE CRYSTALLISED FACTS.

Before the beginning of years
  There came to the rule of the State
Men with a pair of shears,
  Men with an Estimate—
Strachey with Muir for leaven,
  Lytton with locks that fell,
Ripon fooling with Heaven,
  And Temple riding like H–ll!
And the bigots took in hand
  Cess and the falling of rain,
And the measure of sifted sand
  The dealer puts in the grain—
Imports by land and sea,
  To uttermost decimal worth,
And registration—free—
  In the Houses of Death and of Birth;
And fashioned with pens and paper,
  And fashioned in black and white,
With Life for a flickering taper
  And Death for a blazing light—
'Twixt the Armed and the Civil Power,
  That his strength might endure for a span
From Adam's Bridge to Peshawur,
  The Much Administered Man.

In the towns of the North and the East
  They gathered as unto rule;
They bade him starve his priest
  And send his children to school.

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Railways and roads they wrought,
For the needs of the trade within;
A time to squabble in court,
A time to bear and to grin;
And gave him peace in his ways,
Jails—and Police to fight;
Justice at length of days,
And Right—and Might in the Right.
His speech is of mortgaged bedding,
On his kine he borrows yet;
At his heart is his daughter's wedding,
In his eye foreknowledge of debt.
He eats and hath indigestion,
He toils and he may not stop.
His life is a long-drawn question
Between a crop and a crop!

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"O BAAL, HEAR US!"

"An attempt should be made to prepare a moral text-book based upon the fundamental principles of natural religion, such as may be taught in all Government and non-Government colleges."—RESOLUTION OF THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT.

SCENE.—*A Palace in Cloudland. Moral Text-Book Committee discovered at a round table, singing.*

MORALISTS we,
From over the sea,
"From the land where philosophers plenty be—
From the land that produced no Kants with a K,
But many Cants with a C.
Where the Hodmadod crawls in its shell confined,
The Symbol exalted of Fetterless Mind,
And Arithmetic sits on her throne of pride
As Theology personified."
We have fished in the Lake,
And the Worm wouldn't bite.
Our preachers have covered
The Pit from our sight.
By the wisdom of Comte

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We have learned to devise
Our own little roofs, and
Dispense with the skies.
The Gods and the Godlings
On dust-laden shelves
Repose for a sign.
We are all Gods ourselves!

(*Confidentialissimo*)
And so we come here
With gum-pot and shear—
Devoid of convictions, but blessed with long faces,
From every land's vext Book
To clip out a text-book
Which gives us "religion on natural bases."

PRESIDENT (*solo, tremolo*).
In Afric's sunny clime the slave
Assuages both catarrh and grief
By blowing of his nose upon
The Moral Pocket-handkerchief.

His fetich grins beneath the tree—
A skull, three rags, an ostrich-feather;
He turns aside to us who give
Good texts and textile goods together.

Ber-etheren, ere ye stain the pen,
Think of that joyous Afrikander;
What saith the Chief of Married Men?—
"Sauce for the goose will suit the gander."
[*Flourish of silver trumpets.*

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"O BAAL, HEAR US!"

In the name of the Great God Fudge,
I charge ye take good heed
To weigh and sift and sniff and judge
The merits of every creed,
That no man may your wage begrudge,
That your fame may be great indeed,
Who have gotten a God at the Government's nod
In the land where the deities breed!

The Committee fall to their labours. The Indian Pantheon rises behind them in red fire.

CHORUS OF THE INDIAN PANTHEON.

We be the Gods of the East,
Older than all—
Rulers of Greatest and Least,
Rulers of Mourning and Feast,
Rulers of Man and of Beast.
How shall we fall
Whose feet are made firm on men's necks—whose hands hold their heart-strings in thrall?

SEMICHORUS.

Over the strife of the schools
Low the day burns;
Back as the kine to the pools
Each one returns
To the life that he knows, where the altar-flame glows, and the *tulsi* is trimmed in the urns.

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"O BAAL, HEAR US!"

CHORUS.

Will they gape for the husks that ye proffer,
Or move to your song?
And we—have *we* nothing to offer
Who held them so long
In the cloud of the incense, the clash of the cymbal, the blare of the conch and the gong?

PRESIDENT (*jubilantissimo*).

We'll get the text-book ready as quickly as we can
For the Ary—for the Ary—for the Ary-an!

SECRETARY.

I'll go and hunt the Vedas while you play with the Ko-ran
For the Ary—for the Ary—for the Ary-an!

DUET AND DANCE.

Oh, isn't it nice to root out Vice, and usher Virtue in!
And isn't it sad a cultured lad should stumble into sin!
We'd like to have him moral; but, oh, where shall we begin
With the Ary—with the Ary—with the Ary-an?

CHORUS OF COMMITTEE.

Help the Ary—help the Ary—help the Ary-an!
Three-and-thirty million Gods don't improve a man!
Wait till we have forced our potted morals in a can
Down the Ary—down the Ary—down the Ary-an!

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PRESIDENT (*patter-song with piccolo accompaniment.*)

Take a little Rabelais—just a garlic hint;
Out of Locke and Bacon steal something fit to print.
Grind 'em down with Butler, add morsels of Voltaire;
Don't forget the "Precious Fools" sketched by Molière!

"Robert Elsmere," Mallock, Hume, Gibbon (on his knees).
Knock the Ten Commandments out if they fail to please;
Substitute the Penal Code—sections underlined.
There you have a perfect book to form the infant mind!

(*Encore verses may be introduced here according to the taste of the singer or the educational policy of the Government of India.*)

The Committee conclude their labours, and produce Moral Text-Book wrapped in a white handkerchief.

CHORUS.

Now whoso sneers
At our paste and shears
May go, if he can, to the Deuce!
We have built for the Pagan
A first-class Dagon
For strictly official use.

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"O BAAL, HEAR US!"

CHORUS OF ADMIRING ARYAVARTA (*organ, plagal-cadence*).

When Dagon was builded of old
By the Demons who wrought in a day,
His forehead was brazen, his belly was gold,
And his throne was the red river-clay—
But our masters are wiser than they.

[*Trumpets.*

For when Dagon was builded anew,
By the breath of their order they made him,
By the froth of their ink-pots they stayed him,
In cut-paper frills they arrayed him,
The subtle, the supple, the new,
Who is greater than scourges or rods—
An olla podrida
Of Faiths and Fifth-Reader,
The Friend of all Possible Gods!

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THE MARE'S NEST

JANE AUSTIN BEECHER STOWE DE ROUSE
Was good beyond all earthly need;
But, on the other hand, her spouse
Was very, very bad indeed.
He smoked cigars, called churches slow,
And raced—but this she did not know.

For Belial Machiavelli kept
The little fact a secret, and,
Though o'er his minor sins she wept,
Jane Austen did not understand
That Lilly—thirteen-two and bay—
Absorbed one half her husband's pay.

She was so good she made him worse
(Some women are like this, I think);
He taught her parrot how to curse,
Her Assam monkey how to drink.
He vexed her righteous soul until
She went up and he went down hill.

Then came the crisis, strange to say,
Which turned a good wife to a better.
A telegraphic peon, one day,
Brought her—now, had it been a letter
For Belial Machiavelli, I
Know Jane would just have let it lie;

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But 'twas a telegram instead,
Marked "Urgent," and her duty plain
To open it. Jane Austen read:—
"Your Lilly's got a cough again.
Can't understand why she is kept
At your expense." Jane Austen wept.

It was a misdirected wire;
Her husband was at Shaitanpore.
She spread her anger, hot as fire,
Through six thin foreign sheets or more,
Sent off that letter—wrote another
To her solicitor—and mother.

Then Belial Machiavelli saw
Her error and, I trust, his own,
Wired to the minion of the Law,
And travelled wifeward—not alone:
For Lilly—thirteen-two and bay—
Came in a horse-box all the way.

There was a scene—a weep or two,
With many kisses. Austen Jane
Rode Lilly all the season through,
And never opened wires again.
She races now with Belial. This
Is very sad, but so it is.

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THE BALLAD OF FISHER'S BOARDING-HOUSE

That night when through the mooring-chains
The wide-eyed corpse rolled free,
To blunder down by Garden Reach
And rot at Kedgeree,
The tale the Hugli told the shoal
The lean shoal whispered me.

'Twas Fultah Fisher's boarding-house,
Where sailormen reside,
And there were men of all the ports
From Mississip to Clyde,
And regally they spat and smoked,
And fearsomely they lied.

They lied about the purple Sea
That gave them scanty bread,
They lied about the Earth beneath,
The Heavens overhead,
For they had looked too often on
Black rum when that was red.

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And there was Hans the blue-eyed Dane,
  Bull-throated, bare of arm,
Who carried on his hairy chest
  The maid Ultruda's charm—
The little silver crucifix
  That keeps a man from harm.

And there was Jake Without-the-Ears,
  And Pamba, the Malay,
And Carboy Gin, the Guinea cook,
  And Luz from Vigo Bay;
And Honest Jack, who sold them slops
  And harvested their pay.

And there was Salem Hardieker,
  A lean Bostonian he—
Russ, German, English, Half-breed, Finn,
  Yank, Dane, and Portugee,
At Fultah Fisher's boarding-house
  They rested from the sea.

Now Anne of Austria shared their drinks.
  Collinga knew her fame;
From Tarnau in Galicia
  To Jaun Bazaar she came,
To eat the bread of infamy
  And take the wage of shame.

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FISHER'S BOARDING-HOUSE

She held a dozen men to heel—
  Rich spoil of war was hers,
In hose and gown and ring and chain
  From twenty mariners;
And, by Port Law, that week men called
  Her Salem Hardieker's.

But seamen learned—what landsmen know—
  That neither gifts nor gain
Can hold a winking Light-o'-Love
  Or Fancy's flight restrain,
When Anne of Austria rolled her eyes
  On Hans the blue-eyed Dane.

Since Life is strife, and strife means knife,
  From Howrah to the Bay,
And he may die before the dawn
  Who liquored out the day,
In Fultah Fisher's boarding-house
  We woo while yet we may.

But cold was Hans the blue-eyed Dane,
  Bull-throated, bare of arm,
And laughter shook the chest beneath
  The maid Ultruda's charm—
The little silver crucifix
  That keeps a man from harm.

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FISHER'S BOARDING-HOUSE

"You speak to Salem Hardieker—
You was his girl, I know.
I ship mineselfs to-morrow, see,
Und round the Skaw we go,
South, down the Cattegat, by Hjelm,
To Besser in Saro."

When love rejected turns to hate,
All ill betide the man.
"You speak to Salem Hardieker"—
She spoke as woman can.
A scream—a sob—"He called me—names!"
And then the fight began.

An oath from Salem Hardieker,
A shriek upon the stairs,
A dance of shadows on the wall,
A knife-thrust unawares—
And Hans came down, as cattle drop,
Across the broken chairs.

. . . . . .

In Anne of Austria's trembling hands
The weary head fell low:—
"I ship mineselfs to-morrow, straight
For Besser in Saro;
Und there Ultruda comes to me
At Easter, und I go

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FISHER'S BOARDING-HOUSE

"South, down the Cattegat— What's here?
  There—are—no—lights—to—guide!"
The mutter ceased, the spirit passed,
  And Anne of Austria cried
In Fultah Fisher's boarding-house,
  When Hans the mighty died.

Thus slew they Hans the blue-eyed Dane,
  Bull-throated, bare of arm;
But Anne of Austria looted first
  The maid Ultruda's charm—
The little silver crucifix
  That keeps a man from harm.

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THE PLAINT OF THE JUNIOR CIVILIAN

"A handful of juniors just fresh out from Home."—INDIAN PAPER'S DEFINITION OF A "JUNIOR CIVILIAN."

I HAVE worked for ten seasons or more,
In Settlement, District, or Court;
I have served, with the rest of my corps,
All over the Province, in short.
From Ismail accursed, to the Bar,
From Jhang to Peshawur I roam,
And back from Kohat to Hissar;
But—
They tell me I'm "fresh out from Home"!

I have loved, I have lost, twice or thrice;
My weeds are "long Dawsons with straw";
I can sit fourteen-one of shod Vice,
And badger a pleader-at-law;
I can quote with precision the bulk
Of Currie's delectable tome;
I can coax a Hill Chief from a sulk,
And—
I find I am "fresh out from Home."

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PLAINT OF THE JUNIOR CIVILIAN

I can flirt with the girls at the well
  In dialect rude and uncouth;
I can force a fat *Khattri* to tell,
  By accident, half of the truth.
I can chew like a Rajah my *pân*,
  I can slang with a *Naqqal* or *Dôm*,
I can say, "'Térá músha Pathan!"
    Yet—
  They tell me I'm "fresh out from Home."

That home I have quitted an age
  (Ten Junes in the District seem long),
For I sailed when "Our Boys" was the rage,
  And "Tommy make room" was the song.
There's a patch on the top of my pate
  That needs not the care of the comb,
And thirteen-eleven's my weight;
    Though—
  They tell me I'm "fresh out from Home."

I have worn my first saddle and second
  Clean down to the wood of the tree;
And D.C.'s a dozen I've reckoned
  Have managed my transfers and me;
I am learned in roadways and cess,
  In *rabi*, rice-huskers, and loam—
Over thirty, but nevertheless,
    Write
  The papers, I'm "fresh out from Home."

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PLAINT OF THE JUNIOR CIVILIAN

Oh, babes of the Punjab Commission,
  Oh, sucklings of '73,
Consider our humble position,
  Remember what juniors we be!
Oh, lads without standing or credit
  Nous, influence, *ukal*, *aplomb*
The press, in its wisdom, hath said it:
    We
  Are all of us "fresh out from Home."

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POSSIBILITIES

AY, lay him 'neath the Simla pine—
  A fortnight fully to be missed;
  Behold, we lose our fourth at whist,
A chair is vacant where we dine.

His place forgets him; other men
  Have bought his ponies, guns, and traps.
  His fortune is the Great Perhaps
And that cool rest-house down the glen,

Whence he shall hear, as spirits may,
  Our mundane revel on the height,
  Shall watch each flashing 'rickshaw-light
Sweep on to dinner, dance, and play.

Benmore shall woo him to the ball
  With lighted rooms and braying band;
  And he shall hear and understand
"Dream Faces" better than us all.

For, think you, as the vapours flee
  Across Sanjaolie after rain,
  His soul may climb the hill again
To each old field of victory.

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POSSIBILITIES

Unseen, who women held so dear,
  The strong man's yearning to his kind
  Shall shake at most the window-blind,
Or dull awhile the card-room's cheer.

In his own place of power unknown,
  His Light-o'-Love another's flame,
  His dearest pony galloped lame,
And he an alien and alone.

Yet may he meet with many a friend—
  Shrewd shadows, lingering long unseen
  Among us when "God Save the Queen"
Shows even "extras" have an end.

And when we leave the heated room,
  And when at four the lights expire,
  The crew shall gather round the fire
And mock our laughter in the gloom;

Talk as we talked, and they ere death—
  Flirt wanly, dance in ghostly wise,
  With ghosts of tunes for melodies,
And vanish at the morning's breath!

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ARITHMETIC ON THE FRONTIER

A GREAT and glorious thing it is
[redacted]rn, for seven years or so,
[redacted]s what of that and this,
[redacted] fit to face the foe—
[redacted]t down the Pass,
That whistles clear: "All flesh is grass."

Three hundred pounds per annum spent
On making brain and body meeter
For all the murderous intent
Comprised in "villainous saltpeter"!
And after?—Ask the Yusufzaies
What comes of all our 'ologies.

A scrimmage in a Border Station—
A canter down some dark defile—
Two thousand pounds of education
Drops to a ten-rupee *jezail*—
The Crammer's boast, the Squadron's pride,
Shot like a rabbit in a ride!

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ARITHMETIC ON THE FRONTIER

No proposition Euclid wrote,
  No formulæ the text-books know,
Will turn the bullet from your coat,
  Or ward the tulwar's downward blow.
Strike hard who cares—shoot straight who can—
The odds are on the cheaper man.

One sword-knot stolen from the camp
  Will pay for all the school-expenses
Of any Kurrum Valley scamp
  Who knows no word of moods and tenses,
But, being blessed with perfect s[illegible]
Picks off our messmates l[illegible]

With home-bred hordes [illegible]
  The troop-ships bring us, one by one,
At vast expense of time and steam,
  To slay Afridis where they run.
The "captives of our bow and spear"
Are cheap, alas! as we are dear.

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OUR LADY OF REST

THE wind in the pine sings Her praises,
The snows of the North are Her seat,
The bluebells and little Hill-daisies
[redacted] gorgeous the ground at Her feet.
[redacted] health in Her hand for the taking,
[redacted] is peace on the calm of Her breast,
And we yearn to Her, sleeping and waking,
Our Lady of Rest!

The Earth is hot iron beneath us,
The Heavens are brazen above,
The winds of the Firmament seethe us
With blasts from the Pit as they rove.
The cool and the shade have retreated,
The levin-lit dust-clouds attest;
Our furnace is seven-times heated,
O Lady of Rest!

"I have built ye a marvellous palace,
As chill and as green as the sea.
Come up—come away from the valleys;
Inherit, my children, with me!"

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OUR LADY OF REST

Though the yoke of our servitude gall us,
  Laborious, burdened, unblest,
Dare we turn at Her voice, though She call us,
    Our Lady of Rest?

Not ours the silence and scorning,
  Not ours the fault of delay.
Clear twilight brings merciless morning,
  And night little rest after day.
For a handful of silver we sold us,
  White slaves from the Isles of the West,
And the chains of captivity hold us,
    Our Lady of Rest!

Be good to us out of Thy pity,
  For surely, in time, it shall be
That we fly from the sun-smitten city,
  That we win to the mountains and Thee;
And, at last, when the weary Plains leave us,
  When we climb the Himalayan crest,
From the smoke of our torments receive us,
    Our Lady of Rest!

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THE SONG OF THE WOMEN

Lady Dufferin's Fund for Medical Aid to the Women of India.

How shall she know the worship we would do her?
The walls are high and she is very far.
How shall the women's message reach unto her
Above the tumult of the packed bazaar?
Free wind of March, against the lattice blowing,
Bear thou our thanks, lest she depart unknowing.

Go forth across the fields we may not roam in,
Go forth beyond the trees that rim the city
To whatsoe'er fair place she hath her home in
Who dowered us with wealth of love and pity.
Out of our shadow pass and seek her, singing:
"I have no gifts but Love alone for bringing."

Say that we be a feeble folk who greet her,
But old in grief and very wise in tears;
Say that we, being desolate, entreat her

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THE SONG OF THE WOMEN

That she forget us not in after-years;
For we have seen the light, and it were grievous
To dim that dawning if our Lady leave us.

By life that ebbed with none to staunch the failing,
By Love's sad harvest garnered in the spring,
When Love in Ignorance wept unavailing
O'er young buds dead before their blossoming,
By all the grey owl watched, the pale moon viewed
In past grim years, declare our gratitude!

By hands uplifted to the Gods that heard not,
By gifts that found no favour in Their sight,
By faces bent above the babe that stirred not,
By nameless horrors of the stifling night,
By ills foredone, by peace her toils discover,
Bid Earth be good beneath and Heaven above her!

If she have sent her servants in our pain,
If she have fought with Death and dulled his sword,
If she have given back our sick again,
And to the breast the weakling lips restored,
Is it a little thing that she has wrought?
Then Life and Death and Motherhood be naught!

Go forth, O wind, our message on thy wings,
And they shall hear thee pass and bid thee speed,
In reed-roofed hut, or white-walled home of kings,

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Who have been holpen by her in their need.
All spring shall give thee fragrance, and the wheat
Shall be a tasselled floor-cloth to thy feet.

Haste, for our hearts are with thee; take no rest!
Loud-voiced ambassador, from sea to sea
Proclaim the blessing, manifold, confest,
Of those in darkness by her hand set free;
Then very softly to her presence move,
And whisper: "Lady, lo, they know and love!"

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FOR THE WOMEN

"Ave imperatrix, morituræ te salutant!"

WE knit a riven land to strength by cannon, code, and sword;
We drove the road for all men's feet, we bridged the raving ford;
We cleared the waste of force and wrong, we bade the land be still;
And whereso'er that will was good, we wrought the people's will.

The Wisdom of the West is theirs—our schools are free to all.
The strength of all the West is theirs, to prop them lest they fall;
And men may say what things they please, and none dare stay their tongue.
But who has spoken out for these—the women and the young?

Who know but you, O men we taught, and men who teach us now,
Coheirs of our eight hundred years, and . . . Servants of the Cow—

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Who know but you the life you cloak, secure from alien stare?
Are all our gifts for men alone, or may your women share?

Small wish have they for learning's light or Wisdom of the West;
Small wish have you that they should learn, or we should break their rest.
But—pitiless as when He spoke, untempered, quick to slay—
The curse God laid on Eve is theirs for heritage to-day.

You know the "Hundred Danger Time" when, gay with paint and flowers,
Your household Gods are bribed to help the bitter, helpless hours;
You know the worn and rotten mat whereon the mother lies;
You know the *sootak* room unclean, the cell wherein she dies—

Dies, with the babble in her ear of midwife's muttered charm,
Dies, 'spite young Life that strains to stay, the suckling in her arm,
Dies in the three times heated air, scorched by the Birth-fire's breath,
Foredoomed, you say, lest anguish lack, to haunt her home in death.

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FOR THE WOMEN

These things you know, and more than these—grim
secrets of the Dead,
Foul horrors done in ignorance, by Time on Folly
bred.
The women have no voice to speak, but none can
check your pen—
Turn for a moment from your strife and plead their
cause, O men!

Help here—and not for us the boon and not to us the
gain;
Make room to save the babe from death, the mother
from her pain.
Is it so great a thing we ask? Is there no road to
find
When women of our people seek to help your
womenkind?

No word to sap their faith, no talk of Christ or creed
need be,
But woman's help in woman's need and woman's
ministry.
Such healing as the West can give, that healing may
they win.
Draw back the *purdah* for their sakes, and pass our
women in!

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THE BETROTHED

"You must choose between me and your cigar."

OPEN the old cigar-box, get me a Cuba stout,
For things are running crossways, and Maggie and I are out.

We quarrelled about Havanas—we fought o'er a good cheroot;
And I know she is exacting, and she says I am a brute.

Open the old cigar-box—let me consider a space,
In the soft, blue veil of the vapour musing on Maggie's face.

Maggie is pretty to look at, Maggie's a loving lass,
But the prettiest cheeks must wrinkle, the truest of loves must pass.

There's peace in a Laranaga, there's calm in a Henry Clay,
But the best cigar in an hour is finished and thrown away—

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Thrown away for another as perfect and ripe and brown;
But I could not throw away Maggie—for fear o' the talk o' the town!

Maggie, my wife at fifty,—grey and dour and old,—
With never another Maggie to purchase for love or gold!

And the light of Days that have Been, the dark of the Days that Are,
And Love's torch stinking and stale, like the butt of a dead cigar—

The butt of a dead cigar you are bound to keep in your pocket—
With never a new one to light, though it's charred and black to the socket.

Open the old cigar-box—let me consider awhile;
Here is a mild Manila—there is a wifely smile.

Which is the better portion—bondage bought with a ring,
Or a harem of dusky beauties, fifty tied in a string?

Counsellors cunning and silent—comforters true and tried;
And never a one of the fifty to sneer at a rival bride.

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Thought in the early morning, solace in time of woes,
Peace in the hush of the twilight, balm ere my eyelids close.

This will the fifty give me, asking naught in return,
With only a *sati's* passion—to do their duty and burn.

This will the fifty give me. When they are spent and dead,
Five times other fifties shall be my servants instead.

The furrows of far-off Java, the isles of the Spanish Main,
When they hear my harem is empty, will send me my brides again.

I will take no heed to their raiment, nor food for their mouths withal,
So long as the gulls are nesting, so long as the showers fall.

I will scent 'em with best vanilla, with tea will I temper their hides,
And the Moor and the Mormon shall envy who read of the tale of my brides.

For Maggie has written a letter that gives me my choice between
The wee little whimpering Love and the great god Nick-o'-Teen.

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And I have been servant of Love for barely a twelve-month clear,
But I have been Priest of Cabanas a matter of seven year;

And the gloom of my bachelor days is flecked with the cheery light
Of stumps that I burned to Friendship and Pleasure and Work and Fight.

And I turn my eyes to the future that Maggie and I must prove,
But the only light on the marshes is the Will-o'-the-Wisp of Love.

Will it see me safe through my journey or leave me bogged in the mire?
Since a puff of tobacco can cloud it, shall I follow the fitful fire?

Open the old cigar-box—let me consider anew.
Old friends, and who is Maggie that I should abandon *you?*

A million surplus Maggies are willing to bear the yoke;
And a woman is only a woman, but a good cigar is a Smoke.

Light me another Cuba—I hold to my first sworn vows:
If Maggie will have no rival, I'll have no Maggie for spouse!

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A BALLADE OF JAKKO HILL

ONE moment bid the horses wait,
Since tiffin is not laid till three,
Below the upward path and strait
You climbed a year ago with me.
Love came upon us suddenly
And loosed—an idle hour to kill—
A headless, harmless armoury
That smote us both on Jakko Hill.

Ah, Heaven! we would wait and wait
Through Time and to Eternity!
Ah, Heaven! we would conquer Fate
With more than Godlike constancy!
I cut the date upon a tree—
Here stand the clumsy figures still,—
"10–7–'85 A.D.,"—
Damp with the mist on Jakko Hill.

What came of high resolve and great,
And until Death fidelity?
Whose horse is tethered at your gate?
Whose 'rickshaw wheels ride over me?

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No Saint's, I swear; and—let me see
To-night what names your programme fill.
We drift asunder merrily,
As drifts the mist on Jakko Hill!

L'ENVOI

Woman, behold, our ancient state
Has clean departed; and we see
'Twas Idleness we took for Fate
That bound light bonds on you and me.
Amen! Here ends the comedy
Where it began in all good will,
Since Love and Leave together flee
As driven mist on Jakko Hill!

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CARMEN SIMLAENSE

I've danced till my shoes are outworn
From ten till the hours called small;
I've cantered with Beauty at morn—
At even made love at the ball.
Light Loves for five months were my lot,
Heavy bills and long "ticks" that appal
Me when counting the cost of the shot.
Lord! What was the good of it all?

Good-bye to the Annandale roses—
Sweet talks in the dusk on the Mall;
Adieu to a season that closes—
Peliti's, the Club, and the call!
To the pines that moaned over our playtime,
The deodars sombre and tall—
Diversions of night and of daytime.
Lord! What was the good of it all?

I sit on my bulgy portmanteau
(As once in his tent-gloom lay Saul),
And I write me this cynical canto,
In the ink of derision and gall,

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As I think of the cash I must borrow
From that excellent *shroff* Bunsee Lal,
And the tonga I've booked for to-morrow.
Lord! What was the good of it all?

Of tuppenny passions and small,
Of Levée and function and feast,
Of charmers that used to inthral
For a month, or a fortnight at least,
From October to April I'm clear—
From Olympus to Hades I fall.
By the bills on my file, ye were dear!
But what was the good of it all?

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THE PLEA OF THE SIMLA DANCERS

Too late, alas! the song
To remedy the wrong—
The rooms are taken from us, swept and garnished for
their fate.
But these tear-besprinkled pages
Shall attest to future ages
That we cried against the crime of it—too late, alas!
too late!

"What have *we* ever done to bear this grudge?"
Was there no room save only in Benmore
For docket, *duftar*, and for office drudge,
That you usurp our smoothest dancing-floor?
Must Babus do their work on polished teak?
Are ball-rooms fittest for the ink you spill?
Was there no other cheaper house to seek?
You might have left them all at Strawberry Hill.

We never harmed you! Innocent our guise,
Dainty our shining feet, our voices low;
And we revolved to divers melodies,
And we were happy but a year ago.

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THE PLEA OF THE SIMLA DANCERS

To-night the moon that watched our lightsome
wiles—
That beamed upon us through the deodars—
Is wan with gazing on official files,
And desecrating desks disgust the stars.

Nay! by the memory of tuneful nights;
Nay! by the witchery of flying feet;
Nay! by the glamour of foredone delights,
By all things merry, musical, and meet,
By wine that sparkled, and by sparkling eyes,
By wailing waltz, by reckless gallop's strain,
By dim verandahs and by soft replies,
Give us our ravished ball-room back again!

Or—hearken to the curse we lay on you!
The ghosts of waltzes shall perplex your brain,
And murmurs of past merriment pursue
Your 'wildered clerks that they indite in vain;
And when you count your poor Provincial millions,
The only figures that your pen shall frame
Shall be the figures of dear, dear cotillions
Danced out in tumult long before you came.

Yea! "See-Saw" shall upset your estimates,
"Dream Faces" shall your heavy heads bemuse,
Because your hand, unheeding, desecrates
Our temple fit for higher, worthier use.
And all the long verandahs, eloquent
With echoes of a score of Simla years,
Shall plague you with unbidden sentiment—
Babbling of kisses, laughter, love, and tears.

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THE PLEA OF THE SIMLA DANCERS

So shall you mazed amid old memories stand,
  So shall you toil and shall accomplish naught;
And ever in your ears a phantom Band
  Shall blare away the staid official thought.
Wherefore—and ere this awful curse be spoken,
  Cast out your swarthy, sacrilegious train,
And give—ere dancing cease and hearts be broken—
  Give us our ravished ball-room back again!

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"AS THE BELL CLINKS"

As I left the Halls of Lumley, rose the vision of a comely
Maid last season worshipped dumbly, watched with fervour from afar;
And I wondered idly, blindly, if the maid would greet me kindly.
That was all—the rest was settled by the clinking tonga-bar.
Ay, my life and hers were coupled by the tonga coupling-bar.

For my misty meditation, at the second changing-station,
Suffered sudden dislocation, fled before the tuneless jar
Of a Wagner obbligato, scherzo, double-hand staccato,
Played on either pony's saddle by the clanking tonga-bar—
Played with human speech, I fancied, by the jigging, jolting bar.

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"She was sweet," thought I, "last season, but 'twere surely wild unreason
Such a tiny hope to freeze on as was offered by my Star
When she whispered, something sadly: 'I—we feel your going badly.'"
"*And you let the chance escape you?*" rapped the rattling tonga-bar.
"*What a chance and what an idiot!*" clicked the vicious tonga-bar.

Heart of man—oh, heart of putty! Had I gone by Kakahutti,
On the old Hill-road and rutty, I had 'scaped that fatal car:
But his fortune each must bide by, so I watched the mile-stones slide by
To—"*You call on Her to-morrow!*"—fugue with cymbals by the bar—
"*You must call on Her to-morrow!*"—post-horn gallop by the bar.

Yet a farther stage my goal on—we were whirling down to Solon,
With a double lurch and roll on, best foot foremost, *ganz und gar*—
"She was *very* sweet," I hinted. "If a kiss had been imprinted—?"
"*Would ha' saved a world of trouble!*" clashed the busy tonga-bar.
"*'Been accepted or rejected!*" banged and clanged the tonga-bar.

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Then a notion wild and daring, 'spite the income tax's paring
And a hasty thought of sharing—less than many incomes are—
Made me put a question private—you can guess what I would drive at.
"*You must work the sum to prove it*," clanked the careless tonga-bar.
"*Simple Rule of Two will prove it*," lilted back the tonga-bar.

It was under Khyraghaut I mused: "Suppose the maid be haughty
(There are lovers rich—and forty)—wait some wealthy Avatar?
Answer, monitor untiring, 'twixt the ponies twain perspiring!"
"*Faint heart never won fair lady*," creaked the straining tonga-bar.
"*Can I tell you ere you ask Her?*" pounded slow the tonga-bar.

Last, the Tara Devi turning showed the lights of Simla burning,
Lit my little lazy yearning to a fiercer flame by far.
As below the Mall we jingled, through my very heart it tingled—
The reiterated order of the threshing tonga-bar.
"*Try your luck—you can't do better!*" twanged the loosened tonga-bar.

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A BALLADE OF BAD ENTERTAINMENT

A WANDERER from East to West,
From Mandalay to Matheran,
By itch of loaferdom possest,
I scour the plains of Hindustan.
Dismissed the fragrant *gariwān*,[1]
I clamour at each hostelry:
"What, ho! within there, *be imân!*"[2]
"*Khodawund, siruf murghi hai!*"[3]

The days repeat the sorry jest—
The dusty drive, the dreary barn.
"All things await the Sahib's behest,
Borne through his slave Muhammed Jan."
And after? Hear the wild *tūfān*[4]
Among the cockerels as they fly!
What comes of that false-feigned *élan?*
"*Khodawund, siruf murghi hai!*"

Though in ten thousand fashions messed
They bear the *Janwar ki nishan*,[5]
The bold black legs, the bony crest,
The flesh more tough than sailors' yarn,

[1] Driver. [2] Man without faith.
[3] Heaven-born, there is only fowl. [4] Uproar.
[5] Mark of the beast.

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A BALLADE OF BAD ENTERTAINMENT

Oh, land of *uttr* and of *pân*,
For this poor corpse thy children cry,
Loud as the mullah shouts *azán*,[1]
"Khodawund, siruf murghi hai!"

L'ENVOI

Prince! (Here the wearied bard will rest
From long "a" rhymes.) If Famine fan
The flames of Fury in your breast,
And grievously you smite your man,
For his one answer, this I can
Add to your comfort: An he die,
You shall be told by all his clan:
"Khodawund, siruf murghia hai!"[2]

[1] The call to prayer. [2] Heaven-born, he is only dead!

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CHRISTMAS IN INDIA

DIM dawn behind the tamarisks—the sky is saffron yellow—
As the women in the village grind the corn,
And the parrots seek the riverside, each calling to his fellow
That the Day, the staring, Eastern Day, is born.
Oh, the white dust on the highway! Oh, the stenches in the byway!
Oh, the clammy fog that hovers over earth!
And at Home they're making merry 'neath the white and scarlet berry—
What part have India's exiles in their mirth?

Full day behind the tamarisks—the sky is blue and staring—
As the cattle crawl afield beneath the yoke,
And they bear One o'er the field-path who is past all hope or caring
To the ghat below the curling wreaths of smoke.
Call on Rama, going slowly, as ye bear a brother lowly—
Call on Rama—he may hear, perhaps, your voice!
With our hymn-books and our psalters we appeal to other altars,
And to-day we bid "good Christian men rejoice"!

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CHRISTMAS IN INDIA

High noon behind the tamarisks—the sun is hot above us—
As at Home the Christmas Day is breaking wan.
They will drink our healths at dinner—those who tell us how they love us,
And forget us till another year be gone!
Oh, the toil that knows no breaking! Oh, the *Heimweh*, ceaseless, aching!
Oh, the black, dividing Sea and alien Plain!
Youth was cheap—wherefore we sold it.
Gold was good—we hoped to hold it,
And to-day we know the fulness of our gain.

Grey dusk behind the tamarisks—the parrots fly together—
As the Sun is sinking slowly over Home;
And his last ray turns to jeer us shackled in a life-long tether
That drags us back, howe'er so far we roam.
Hard her service, poor her payment—she in ancient, tattered raiment—
India, she the grim stepmother of our kind.
If a year of life be lent her, if her temple's shrine we enter,
The door is shut—we may not look behind.

Black night behind the tamarisks—the owls begin their chorus—
As the conches from the temple scream and bray.
With the fruitless years behind us and the hopeless years before us,
Let us honour, oh, my brothers, Christmas Day!

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Call a truce, then, to our labours—let us feast
with friends and neighbours,
And be merry as the custom of our caste;
For, if "faint and forced the laughter," and if
sadness follow after,
We are richer by one mocking Christmas past.

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"NEW LAMPS FOR OLD"

WHEN the flush of the new-born sun fell first on
Eden's green and gold,
A Lying Spirit sat under the Tree and sang, "New
Lamps for Old!"
And Adam waked from his mighty sleep, and Eve
was at his side,
And the twain had faith in the song that they heard,
and knew not the Spirit lied.

They plucked a lamp from the Eden-tree (the ancient
legend saith),
And lighted themselves the Path of Toil that runs to
the Gate of Death;
They left the lamp for the joy of their sons, and that
was a glorious gain,
When the Spirit cried, "New Lamps for Old!" in the
ear of the branded Cain.

So he gat fresh hope, and builded a town, and watched
his breed increase,
Till Tubal lighted the Lamp of War from the flickering
Lamp of Peace;

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And ever they fought with fire and sword and travailed in hate and fear,
As the Spirit sang, "New Lamps for Old!" at the change of the changing year.

They sought new lamps in the Morning-red, they sought new lamps in the West,
Till the waters covered the pitiful land and the heart of the world had rest—
Had rest with the Rain of the Forty Days, but the Ark rode safe above,
And the Spirit cried, "New Lamps for Old!" when Noah loosened the Dove.

And some say now that the Eden-tree had never a root on earth;
And some say now from an eyeless eft our Father Adam had birth;
And some say now there was never an Ark and never a God to save;
And some say now that Man is a God, and some say Man is a slave;

And some build altars East and West, and some build North and South;
And some bow down to the Work of the Hand and some to the Word of the Mouth.
But wheresoever a heart may beat or a hand reach forth to hold,
The Spirit comes with the coming year, and cries, "New Lamps for Old!"

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And the sons of Adam leave their toil who are cursed
with the Curse of Hope,
And hang the profitless past in a noose of the thun-
dering belfry's rope,
And tear the branch from the laurel-bush with feast-
ings manifold,
When the cry goes up to the scornful stars, "New
Lamps! New Lamps for Old!"

Though all the lamps that ever were lit have winked
at the world for years,
The sons of Adam crowd the streets with laughter
and sighs and tears;
For they hold that new, strange lamps shall shine to
guide their feet aright,
And they turn their eyes to the scornful stars and
stretch their arms to the night.

And the Spirit gives them the Lamp of War that
burns at the cannon-lip,
As it blazed on the point of Tubal's blade and the
prow of the battle-ship;
And the Lamp of Love that was Eve's to snatch from
Lilith under the Tree;
And the Lamp of Fame that is old as Strife and dim
as Memory;

And the Lamp of Faith that was won from Job, and
of Shame that was wrung from Cain;
And the Lamp of Youth that was Adam's once, and
the cold blue Lamp of Pain;

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And last is the terrible Lamp of Hope that every man must bear,
Lest he find his peace ere the day of his death by the light of the Lamp Despair.

We know that the Eden Lamp is lost,—if ever were Eden made,—
And the ink of the Schools in the Lamp of Faith has sunk a world in the shade;
But ever we look for a light that is new, and ever the Spirit cries,
"New Lamps for Old!" and we take the lamps, and—behold, the Spirit lies!

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THE GRAVE OF THE HUNDRED HEAD

There's a widow in sleepy Chester
Who weeps for her only son;
There's a grave on the Pabeng River,
A grave that the Burmans shun;
And there's Subadar Prag Tewarri,
Who knows how the work was done.

A Snider squibbed in the jungle—
Somebody laughed and fled,
And the men of the First Shikaris
Picked up their Subaltern dead,
With a big blue mark in his forehead
And the back blown out of his head.

Subadar Prag Tewarri,
Jemadar Hira Lal,
Took command of the party,
Twenty rifles in all,
Marched them down to the river
As the day was beginning to fall.

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GRAVE OF THE HUNDRED HEAD

They buried the boy by the river,
A blanket over his face;
They wept for their dead Lieutenant,
The men of an alien race—
They made a *samádh* in his honour,
A mark for his resting-place.

For they swore by the Holy Water,
They swore by the salt they ate,
That the soul of Lieutenant Eshmitt Sahib
Should go to his God in state,
With fifty file of Burman
To open him Heaven's gate.

The men of the First Shikaris
Marched till the break of day,
Till they came to the rebel village,
The village of Pabengmay—
A jingal covered the clearing,
Calthrops hampered the way.

Subadar Prag Tewarri,
Bidding them load with ball,
Halted a dozen rifles
Under the village wall—
Sent out a flanking-party
With Jemadar Hira Lal.

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GRAVE OF THE HUNDRED HEAD

The men of the First Shikaris
  Shouted and smote and slew,
Turning the grinning jingal
  On to the howling crew!
The Jemadar's flanking-party
  Butchered the folk who flew.

Long was the morn of slaughter,
  Long was the list of slain—
Fivescore heads were taken,
  Fivescore heads and twain;
And the men of the First Shikaris
  Went back to their grave again;

Each man bearing a basket
  Red as his palms that day,
Red as the blazing village—
  The village of Pabengmay.
And the *drip-drip-drip* from the baskets
  Reddened the grass by the way.

They made a pile of their trophies
  High as a tall man's chin,
Head upon head distorted,
  Clinched in a sightless grin,
Anger and pain and terror
  Writ on the smoke-scorched skin.

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GRAVE OF THE HUNDRED HEAD

Subadar Prag Tewarri
  Set the head of the Boh
On the top of the mound of triumph,
  The head of his son below,
With the sword and the Peacock-banner,
  That the world might behold and know.

Thus the *samádh* was perfect,
  Thus was the lesson plain
Of the wrath of the First Shikaris—
  The price of a white man slain;
And the men of the First Shikaris
  Went back into camp again.

Then a silence came to the river,
  A hush fell over the shore,
And Bohs that were brave departed,
  And Sniders squibbed no more;
For the Burmans said that a *kullah's* head
  Must be paid for with heads fivescore.

There's a widow in sleepy Chester
  Who weeps for her only son;
There's a grave on the Pabeng River,
  A grave that the Burmans shun;
And there's Subadar Prag Tewarri,
  Who tells how the work was done.

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AN OLD SONG

So long as 'neath the Kalka hills
The tonga-horn shall ring,
So long as down the Solon dip
The hard-held ponies swing,
So long as Tara Devi sees
The lights o' Simla town,
So long as Pleasure calls us up
And duty drives us down,
If you love me as I love you
What pair so happy as we two?

So long as Aces take the King,
Or backers take the bet,
So long as debt leads men to wed,
Or marriage leads to debt;
So long as little luncheons, Love,
And scandal hold their vogue,
While there is sport at Annandale
Or whisky at Jutogh,
If you love me as I love you
What knife can cut our love in two?

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AN OLD SONG

So long as down the rocking floor
  The raving polka spins,
So long as Kitchen Lancers spur
  The maddened violins;
So long as through the whirling smoke
  We hear the oft-told tale:—
"Twelve hundred in the Lotteries,
  And What's-her-name for sale."
If you love me as I love you
We'll play the game and win it too.

So long as Lust or Lucre tempt
  Straight riders from the course,
So long as with each drink we pour
  Black brewage of Remorse;
So long as those unloaded guns
  We keep beside the bed
Blow off, by obvious accident,
  The lucky owner's head,
If you love me as I love you
What can Life kill or Death undo?

So long as Death 'twixt dance and dance
  Chills best the bravest blood
And drops the reckless rider down
  The rotten, rain-soaked *khud;*
So long as rumours from the North
  Make loving wives afraid,
So long as Burma claims the boy
  Or typhoid kills the maid,
If you love me as I love you
What knife can cut our love in two?

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AN OLD SONG

By all that lights our daily life
  Or marks our lifelong woe,
From Boileaugunge to Simla Downs
  And those grim glades below,
Where, heedless of the flying hoof
  And clamour overhead,
Sleep, with the gay *langur* for guard,
  Our very scornful Dead,
If you love me as I love you
All Earth is servant to us two!

By Docket, Billet-doux, and File,
  By Mountain, Cliff, and Fir,
By Fan and Sword and Office-box,
  By Corset, Plume, and Spur;
By Riot, Revel, Waltz, and War,
  By Woman, Work, and Bills,
By all the life that fizzes in
  The everlasting Hills,
If you love me as I love you
What pair so happy as we two?

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CERTAIN MAXIMS OF HAFIZ

IF It be pleasant to look on, stalled in the packed *serai*,
Does not the Young Man try Its temper and pace ere he buy?
If She be pleasant to look on, what does the Young Man say?
"Lo! She is pleasant to look on; give Her to me to-day!"

Yea, though a Kafir die, to him is remitted Jehannum
If he borrowed in life from a native at sixty per cent. per annum.

Blister we not for *bursati?* So when the heart is vext,
The pain of one maiden's refusal is drowned in the pain of the next.

The temper of chums, the love of your wife, and a new piano's tune—
Which of the three will you trust at the end of an Indian June?

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CERTAIN MAXIMS OF HAFIZ

Who are the rulers of Ind—to whom shall we bow
the knee?
Make your peace with the women, and men will make
you L.G.

Does the woodpecker flit round the young *ferash?*
Does grass clothe a new-built wall?
Is she under thirty, the woman who holds a boy in
her thrall?

If She grow suddenly gracious—reflect. Is it all for
thee?
The blackbuck is stalked through the bullock, and
Man through jealousy.

Seek not for favour of women. So shall you find it,
indeed.
Does not the boar break cover just when you're
lighting a weed?

If He play, being young and unskilful, for shekels of
silver and gold,
Take His money, my son, praising Allah. The Kid
was ordained to be sold.

With a "weed" among men or horses verily this is
the best,
That you work him in office or dog-cart lightly—but
give him no rest.

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CERTAIN MAXIMS OF HAFIZ

Pleasant the snaffle of Courtship, improving the manners and carriage,
But the colt who is wise will abstain from the terrible thorn-bit of Marriage.

As the thriftless gold of the *babul* so is the gold that we spend
On a Derby Sweep, or our neighbour's wife, or the horse that we buy from a friend.

The ways of man with a maid be strange, yet simple and tame
To the ways of a man with a horse, when selling or racing that same.

In public Her face turneth to thee, and pleasant Her smile when ye meet.
It is ill. The cold rocks of El-Gidar smile thus on the waves at their feet.
In public Her face is averted, with anger She nameth thy name.
It is well. Was there ever a loser content with the loss of the game?

If She have spoken a word, remember thy lips are sealed,
And the Brand of the Dog is upon him by whom is the secret revealed.

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CERTAIN MAXIMS OF HAFIZ

If She have written a letter, delay not an instant, but burn it.
Tear it in pieces, O Fool, and the wind to her mate shall return it!
If there be trouble to Herward, and a lie of the blackest can clear,
Lie, while thy lips can move or a man is alive to hear!

My Son, if a maiden deny thee and scufflingly bid thee give o'er,
Yet lip meets with lip at the lastward—get out! she has been there before.
They are pecked on the ear and the chin and the nose who are lacking in lore.

If we fall in the race, though we win, the hoof-slide is scarred on the course.
Though Allah and Earth pardon Sin, remaineth for ever Remorse.

"By all I am misunderstood!" if the Matron shall say; or the Maid,
"Alas! I do not understand," my son be thou nowise afraid.
In vain in the sight of the Bird is the net of the Fowler displayed.

My son, if I, Hafiz, thy father, take hold of thy knees in my pain,
Demanding thy name on stamped paper, one day or one hour—refrain.
Are the links of thy fetters so light that thou cravest another man's chain?

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THE MOON OF OTHER DAYS

BENEATH the deep verandah's shade,
When bats begin to fly,
I sit me down and watch—alas!
Another evening die.
Blood-red behind the sere *ferash*
She rises through the haze.
Sainted Diana! can that be
The Moon of Other Days?

Ah! shade of little Kitty Smith,
Sweet Saint of Kensington!
Say, was it ever thus at Home
The Moon of August shone,
When arm in arm we wandered long
Through Putney's evening haze,
And Hammersmith was Heaven beneath
The Moon of Other Days?

But Wandle's stream is Sutlej now,
And Putney's evening haze
The dust that half a hundred kine
Before my window raise.

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THE MOON OF OTHER DAYS

Unkempt, unclean, athwart the mist
The seething city looms;
In place of Putney's golden gorse
The sickly *babul* blooms.

Glare down, old Hecate, through the dust
And bid the pie-dog yell;
Draw from the drain its typhoid germ—
From each bazaar its smell;
Yea, suck the fever from the tank
And sap my strength therewith.
Thank Heaven, you show a smiling face
To little Kitty Smith!

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THE FALL OF JOCK GILLESPIE

THIS fell when dinner-time was done—
'Twixt the first an' the second rub—
That oor mon Jock cam' hame again
To his rooms ahint the Club.

An' syne he laughed, an' syne he sang,
An' syne we thocht him fou,
An' syne he trumped his partner's trick,
An' garred his partner rue.

Then up and spake an elder mon,
That held the Spade its Ace:
"God save the lad! Whence comes the licht
That wimples on his face?"

An' Jock he sniggered, an' Jock he smiled,
An' ower the card-brim wunk.
"I'm a' too fresh fra' the stirrup-peg;
'May be that I am drunk."

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THE FALL OF JOCK GILLESPIE

"There's whusky brewed in Galashiels,
An' L.L.L. forbye;
But never liquor lit the low
That keeks fra' oot your eye.

"There's a thrid o' hair on your dress-coat breast,
Aboon the heart a wee?"
"Oh! that is fra' the long-haired Skye
That slobbers ower me."

"Oh! lang-haired Skyes are lovin' beasts,
An' terrier-dogs are fair,
But never yet was terrier born
Wi' ell-lang gowden hair!

"There's a smirch o' pouther on your breast,
Below the left lapel?"
"Oh! that is fra' my auld cigar,
Whenas the stump-end fell."

"Mon Jock, ye smoke the Trichi coarse,
For ye are short o' cash;
An' best Havanas couldna leave
Sae white an' pure an ash.

"This nicht ye stopped a story braid,
An' stopped it wi' a curse—
Last nicht ye told that tale yoursel',
An' capped it wi' a worse!

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THE FALL OF JOCK GILLESPIE

"Oh! we're no fou! Oh! we're no fou!
But plainly we can ken
Ye're fallin', fallin', fra' the band
O' canty single men!"

An' it fell when *siris*-shaws were sere,
An' the nichts were lang an' m'rk,
In braw new breeks, wi' a gowden ring,
Oor Jockie gaed to the Kirk.

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WHAT THE PEOPLE SAID

(JUNE 21, 1887)

By the well, where the bullocks go
Silent and blind and slow—
By the field, where the young corn dies
In the face of the staring skies,
They have heard, as the dull Earth hears
The voice of the wind of an hour,
The sound of the Great Queen's voice:
"My God hath given me years,
Hath granted dominion and power:
And I bid you, O Land, rejoice."

And the Ploughman settles the share
More deep in the grudging clod;
For he saith: "The wheat is my care,
And the rest is the will of God.
He sent the Mahratta spear
As He sendeth the rain,
And the *Mlech*, in the fated year,
Broke the spear in twain,
And was broken in turn. Who knows
How our Lords make strife?
It is good that the young wheat grows,
For the bread is Life."

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Then, far and near, as the twilight drew,
  Hissed up to the scornful dark
Great serpents, blazing, of red and blue,
That rose and faded, and rose anew,
  That the Land might wonder and mark.
"To-day is a day of days," they said.
"Make merry, O People all!"
And the Ploughman listened and bowed his head;
"To-day and to-morrow God's Will," he said,
As he trimmed the lamps on the wall.

"He sendeth us years that are good,
As He sendeth the dearth.
He giveth to each man his food,
Or Her food to the Earth.
Our Kings and our Queens are afar—
On their peoples be peace.
God bringeth the Rains to the Bar,
That our cattle increase."

And the Ploughman settled the share
More deep in the sun-dried clod:
"Mogul, Mahratta, and *Mlech* from the North,
And White Queen over the Seas—
God raiseth them up and driveth them forth
As the dust of the ploughshare flies in the breeze;
But the wheat and the cattle are all my care,
And the rest is the will of God."

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THE UNDERTAKER'S HORSE

" To-tschin-shu is condemned to death. How can he drink tea with the Executioner ? "—JAPANESE PROVERB.

THE eldest son bestrides him,
And the pretty daughter rides him,
And I meet him oft o' mornings on the Course;
And there wakens in my bosom
An emotion chill and gruesome
As I canter past the Undertaker's Horse.

Neither shies he nor is restive,
But a hideously suggestive
Trot, professional and placid, he affects;
And the cadence of his hoof-beats
To my mind this grim reproof beats:
" Mend your pace, my friend. I'm coming. Who's the next? "

Ah! stud-bred of ill-omen,
I have watched the strongest go—men
Of pith and might and muscle—at your heels,
Down the plantain-bordered highway
(Heaven send it ne'er be my way!),
In a lacquered box and jetty upon wheels.

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THE UNDERTAKER'S HORSE

Answer, sombre beast and dreary,
Where is Brown, the young, the cheery?
Smith, the pride of all his friends and half the Force?
You were at that last dread *dak*
We must cover at a walk;
Bring them back to me, O Undertaker's Horse!

With your mane unhogged and flowing,
And your curious way of going,
And that businesslike black crimping of your tail,
E'en with Beauty on your back, sir,
Pacing as a lady's hack, sir,
What wonder when I meet you I turn pale?

It may be you wait your time, Beast,
Till I write my last bad rhyme, Beast,
Quit the sunlight, cut the rhyming, drop the glass,—
Follow after with the others,
Where some dusky heathen smothers
Us with marigolds in lieu of English grass.

Or, perchance, in years to follow,
I shall watch your plump sides hollow,
See Carnifex (gone lame) become a corse—
See old age at last o'erpower you,
And the Station Pack devour you;
I shall chuckle then, O Undertaker's Horse!

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But to insult, gibe, and quest, I've
Still the hideously suggestive
Trot that hammers out the unrelenting text,
And I hear it hard behind me
In what place soe'er I find me:
"Sure to catch you sooner or later. Who's the next?"

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ONE VICEROY RESIGNS

LORD DUFFERIN TO LORD LANSDOWNE

So here's your Empire. No more wine, then?
Good.
We'll clear the Aides and *khitmutgars* away.
(You'll know that fat old fellow with the knife—
He keeps the Name-Book, talks in English, too,
And almost thinks himself the Government.)
O Youth, Youth, Youth! Forgive me, you're so
young.
Forty from sixty—twenty years of work
And power to back the working. *Ay de mi!*
You want to know, you want to see, to touch
And, by your lights, to act? It's natural.
I wonder can I help you. Let me try.
You saw—what did you see from Bombay east?
Enough to frighten any one but me?
Neat, that—it frightened Me in Eighty-Four!
You shouldn't take a man from Canada
And bid him smoke in powder-magazines;
Nor with a Reputation such as . . . Bah!
That ghost has haunted me for twenty years,

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My Reputation now full-blown—Your fault—
Yours, with your stories of the strife at Home,
Who's up, who's down, who leads and who is led—
One reads so much, one hears so little here.
Well, now's your turn of exile. I go back
To Rome and leisure. All roads lead to Rome;
Or books—the refuge of the destitute.
When you . . . that brings me back to India. See!
Start clear. *I* couldn't. Egypt served my turn.
You'll never plumb the Oriental mind,
And if you did it isn't worth the toil.
Think of a sleek French priest in Canada;
Divide by twenty half-breeds. Multiply
By twice the Sphinx's silence. There's your East,
And you're as wise as ever. So am I.
Accept on trust and work in darkness, strike
At venture, stumble forward, make your mark,
(It's chalk on granite), then thank God no flame
Leaps from the rock to shrivel mark and man.
I'm clear—my mark is made. Three months of drouth
Had ruined much. It rained and washed away
The specks that might have gathered on my Name.
I took a country twice the size of France,
And shuttered up one doorway in the North.
I stand by those. You'll find that both will pay.
I staked my Name on both—they're yours to-night.
Hold to them—they hold fame enough for two.
I'm old, but I shall live till Burma pays.
Men there—*not* German traders—Cr-sthw-te knows—

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You'll find it in my papers. For the North,
Guns always—quietly—but always guns.
You've seen your Council? Yes, they'll try to rule,
And prize their Reputations. Have you met
A grim lay-reader with a taste for coins,
And faith in Sin most men withhold from God?
He's gone to England. R–p–n knew his grip
And kicked. A Council always has its H–pes.
They look for nothing from the West but Death
Or Bath or Bournemouth. Here's their ground.
They fight
Until the Middle Classes take them back,
One of ten millions plus a C.S.I.,
Or drop in harness. Legion of the Lost?
Not altogether—earnest, narrow men,
But chiefly earnest, and they'll do your work,
And end by writing letters to the "Times."
(Shall *I* write letters, answering H–nt–r—fawn
With R–p–n on the Yorkshire grocers? Ugh!)
They have their Reputations. Look to one—
I work with him—the smallest of them all,
White-haired, red-faced, who sat the plunging horse
Out in the garden. He's your right-hand man,
And dreams of tilting W–ls–y from the throne,
But while he dreams gives work we cannot buy;
He has his Reputation—wants the Lords
By way of Frontier Roads. Meantime, I think,
He values very much the hand that falls
Upon his shoulder at the Council table—
Hates cats and knows his business: ***which is yours.***
Your business? Twice a hundred million souls.

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Your business? I could tell you what I did
Some nights of Eighty-Five, at Simla, worth
A Kingdom's ransom. When a big ship drives
God knows to what new reef, the man at the wheel
Prays with the passengers. They lose their lives,
Or rescued go their way; but he's no man
To take his trick at the wheel again. That's worse
Than drowning. Well, a galled Mashobra mule
(You'll see Mashobra) passed me on the Mall,
And I was—some fool's wife had ducked and bowed
To show the others I would stop and speak.
Then the mule fell—three galls, a hand-breadth each,
Behind the withers. Mrs. What's-his-name
Leers at the mule and me by turns, thweet thoul!
"How could they make him carry such a load!"
I saw—it isn't often I dream dreams—
More than the mule that minute—smoke and flame
From Simla to the haze below. That's weak?
You're younger? You'll dream dreams before you've done.
You've youth, that's one—good workmen—that means two
Fair chances in your favour. Fate's the third.
I know what *I* did. Do you ask me, "Preach?"
I answer by my past or else go back
To platitudes of rule—or take you thus
In confidence and say: "You know the trick:
You've governed Canada. You know. *You* know!"
And all the while commend you to Fate's hand
(Here at the top one loses sight o' God),
Commend you, then, to something more than you—

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The Other People's blunders and . . . that's all.
I'd agonise to serve you if I could.
It's incommunicable, like the cast
That drops the tackle with the gut adry.
Too much—too little—there's your salmon lost!
And so I tell you nothing—wish you luck,
And wonder—how I wonder!—for your sake,
And triumph for my own. You're young, you're young;
You hold to half a hundred Shibboleths.
I'm old. I followed Power to the last,
Gave her my best, and Power followed Me.
It's worth it—on my soul I'm speaking plain,
Here by the claret-glasses!—worth it all.
I gave—no matter what I gave—I win.
I *know* I win. Mine's work, good work that lives!
A country twice the size of France—the North
Safeguarded. That's my record: sink the rest
And better if you can. The Rains may serve,
Rupees may rise—threepence will give you Fame—
It's rash to hope for sixpence. If they rise
Get guns, more guns, and lift the salt-tax.
Oh!
I told you what the Congress meant or thought?
I'll answer nothing. Half a year will prove
The full extent of time and thought you'll spare
To Congress. Ask a Lady Doctor *once*
How little Begums see the light—deduce
Thence how the True Reformer's child is born.
It's interesting, curious . . . and vile.
I told the Turk he was a gentleman.

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I told the Russian that his Tartar veins
Bled pure Parisian ichor, and he purred.
Our Congress doesn't purr. I think it swears.
You're young—you'll swear too ere you've reached
the end.
The End! God help you, if there be a God.
(There must be one to startle Gl–dst–ne's soul
In that new land where all the wires are cut,
And Cr–ss snores anthems on the asphodel.)
God help you! And I'd help you if I could,
But that's beyond me. Yes, your speech was crude.
Sound claret after olives—yours and mine;
But Medoc slips into *vin ordinaire*
(I'll drink my first at Genoa to your health).
Raise it to Hock. You'll never catch my style.
And, after all, the middle-classes grip
The middle-class—for Brompton talk Earl's Court.
Perhaps you're right. I'll see you in the "Times"—
A quarter-column of eye-searing print,
A leader once a quarter—then a war;
The Strand a-bellow through the fog:—"Defeat!"
"'Orrible slaughter!" While you lie awake
And wonder. Oh, you'll wonder ere you're free!
I wonder now. The four years slide away
So fast, so fast, and leave me here alone.
R—y C–l–vn, L—l, R–b–rts, B–ck, the rest,
Princes and Powers of Darkness, troops and trains,
(I *cannot* sleep in trains), land piled on land,
Whitewash and weariness, red rockets, dust,
White snows that mocked me, palaces—with draughts,
And W–stl–nd with the drafts he couldn't pay,

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ONE VICEROY RESIGNS

Poor W–ls–n reading his obituary
Before he died, and H–pe, the man with bones,
And A–tch–s–n a dripping mackintosh
At Council in the Rains, his grating "Sirrr"
Half drowned by H–nt–r's silky: "Bát, my lahd"—
Hunterian always; M–rsh–l spinning plates
Or standing on his head; the Rent Bill's roar,
A hundred thousand speeches, much red cloth,
And Smiths thrice happy if I call them Jones
(I can't remember half their names), or reined
My pony on the Mall to greet their wives.
More trains, more troops, more dust, and then all's done.
Four years, and I forget! If I forget
How shall *they* bear me in their minds? The North
Safeguarded—nearly (R–b–rts knows the rest),
A country twice the size of France annexed.
That stays at least. The rest may pass—may pass—
Your heritage—and I can teach you naught.
"High trust," "vast honour," "interests twice as vast,"
"Due reverence to your Council"—keep to those.
I envy you the twenty years you've gained,
But not the five to follow. What's that? One?
Two?—Surely not so late. Good night. *Don't* dream.

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THE GALLEY-SLAVE

OH, gallant was our galley, from her carven steering-wheel
To her figurehead of silver and her beak of hammered steel;
The leg-bar chafed the ankle and we gasped for cooler air,
But no galley on the water with our galley could compare!

Our bulkheads bulged with cotton and our masts were stepped in gold—
We ran a mighty merchandise of niggers in the hold;
The white foam spun behind us, and the black shark swam below,
As we gripped the kicking sweep-head and we made that galley go.

'Twas merry in the galley, for we revelled now and then—
If they wore us down like cattle, faith, we fought and loved like men!
As we snatched her through the water, so we snatched a minute's bliss,
And the mutter of the dying never spoiled the lovers' kiss.

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Our women and our children toiled beside us in the dark—
They died, we filed their fetters, and we hove them to the shark—
We hove them to the fishes, but so fast the galley sped
We had only time to envy, for we could not mourn our dead.

Bear witness, once my comrades, what a hard-bit gang were we—
The servants of the sweep-head, but the masters of the sea!
By the hands that drove her forward as she plunged and yawed and sheered,
Woman, Man, or God or Devil, was there anything we feared?

Was it storm? Our fathers faced it and a wilder never blew;
Earth that waited for the wreckage watched the galley struggle through.
Burning noon or choking midnight, Sickness, Sorrow, Parting, Death?
Nay, our very babes would mock you had they time for idle breath.

But to-day I leave the galley and another takes my place;
There's my name upon the deck-beam—let it stand a little space.

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THE GALLEY-SLAVE

I am free—to watch my messmates beating out to
open main—
Free of all that Life can offer, save to handle sweep
again.

By the brand upon my shoulder, by the gall of cling-
ing steel;
By the welt the whips have left me, by the scars that
never heal;
By eyes grown old with staring through the sun-wash
on the brine,
I am paid in full for service—would that service still
were mine!

Yet they talk of times and seasons and of woe the
years bring forth,
Of our galley swamped and shattered in the rollers of
the North,
When the niggers break the hatches and the decks
are gay with gore,
And a craven-hearted pilot crams her crashing on
the shore.

She will need no half-mast signal, minute-gun, or
rocket-flare,
When the cry for help goes seaward, she will find her
servants there.
Battered chain-gangs of the orlop, grizzled drafts of
years gone by—
To the bench that broke their manhood they shall
lash themselves and die.

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Hale and crippled, young and aged, paid, deserted, shipped away—
Palace, cot, and lazaretto shall make up the tale that day
When the skies are black above them, and the decks ablaze beneath,
And the top-men clear the raffle with their clasp-knives in their teeth.

It may be that Fate will give me life and leave to row once more—
Set some strong man free for fighting as I take awhile his oar.
But to-day I leave the galley. Shall I curse her service, then?
God be thanked—whate'er comes after—I have lived and toiled with Men!

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A TALE OF TWO CITIES

WHERE the sober-coloured cultivator smiles
On his *byles;*
Where the cholera, the cyclone, and the crow
Come and go;
Where the merchant deals in indigo and tea,
Hides and *ghi;*
Where the Babu drops inflammatory hints
In his prints;
Stands a City—Charnock chose it—packed away
Near a Bay—
By the sewage rendered fetid, by the sewer
Made impure,
By the Sunderbunds unwholesome, by the swamp
Moist and damp;
And the City and the Viceroy, as we see,
Don't agree.

Once, two hundred years ago, the trader came,
Meek and tame.
Where his timid foot first halted, there he stayed
Till mere trade
Grew to Empire, and he sent his armies forth
South and North,

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Till the country from Peshawur to Ceylon
Was his own.
Thus the midday halt of Charnock—more's the pity!—
Grew a City.
As the fungus sprouts chaotic from its bed,
So it spread—
Chance-directed, chance-erected, laid and built
On the silt—
Palace, byre, hovel—poverty and pride—
Side by side;
And, above the packed and pestilential town,
Death looked down.

But the Rulers in that City by the Sea
Turned to flee—
Fled with each returning Springtide from its ills
To the Hills.
From the clammy fogs of morning, from the blaze
Of the days,
From the sickness of the noontide, from the heat,
Beat retreat;
For the country from Peshawur to Ceylon
Was their own.
But the Merchant risked the perils of the Plain
For his gain.
Now the resting-place of Charnock, 'neath the palms,
Asks an alms,
And the burden of its lamentation is
Briefly this:
"Because, for certain months, we boil and stew,
So should you

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Cast the Viceroy and his Council to perspire
In our fire!"
And for answer to the argument, in vain
We explain
That an amateur St. Lawrence cannot cry:
"*All* must fry!"
That the Merchant risks the perils of the Plain
For his gain.
Nor can Rulers rule a house that men grow rich in
From its kitchen.

Let the Babu drop inflammatory hints
In his prints,
And mature—consistent soul—his plan for stealing
To Darjeeling;
Let the Merchant seek, who makes his silver pile,
England's isle;
Let the City Charnock pitched on—evil day!—
Go Her way.
Though the argosies of Asia at Her doors
Heap their stores,
Though Her enterprise and energy secure
Income sure,
Though "out-station orders punctually obeyed"
Swell Her trade—
Still, for rule, administration, and the rest
Simla's best.

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IN SPRINGTIME

My garden blazes brightly with the rose-bush and the peach,
And the *köil* sings above it, in the *siris* by the well;
From the creeper-covered trellis comes the squirrel's chattering speech,
And the blue jay screams and flutters where the cheery *sat-bhai* dwell.
But the rose has lost its fragrance, and the *köil's* note is strange;
I am sick of endless sunshine, sick of blossom-burdened bough.
Give me back the leafless woodlands where the winds of Springtime range—
Give me back one day in England, for it's Spring in England now!

Through the pines the gusts are booming, o'er the brown fields blowing chill,
From the furrow of the ploughshare steams the fragrance of the loam,
And the hawk nests in the cliff-side and the jackdaw on the hill,
And my heart is back in England 'mid the sights and sounds of Home.

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But the garland of the sacrifice this wealth of rose and peach is;
Ah! *köil*, little *köil*, singing on the *siris*-bough,
In my ears the knell of exile your ceaseless bell-like speech is—
Can *you* tell me aught of England or of Spring in England now?

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GIFFEN'S DEBT

Imprimis, he was "broke." Thereafter left
His regiment and, later, took to drink;
Then, having lost the balance of his friends,
"Went Fantee"—joined the people of the land,
Turned three parts Mussulman and one Hindu,
And lived among the Gauri villagers,
Who gave him shelter and a wife or twain,
And boasted that a thorough, full-blood *sahib*
Had come among them. Thus he spent his time,
Deeply indebted to the village *shroff*
(Who never asked for payment), always drunk,
Unclean, abominable, out-at-heels,
Forgetting that he was an Englishman.

You know they dammed the Gauri with a dam,
And all the good contractors scamped their work,
And all the bad material at hand
Was used to dam the Gauri—which was cheap,
And, therefore, proper. Then the Gauri burst,
And several hundred thousand cubic tons
Of water dropped into the valley, *flop*,
And drowned some five-and-twenty villagers,
And did a lakh or two of detriment

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To crops and cattle. When the flood went down
We found him dead, beneath an old dead horse,
Full six miles down the valley. So we said
He was a victim to the Demon Drink,
And moralised upon him for a week,
And then forgot him. Which was natural.

But, in the valley of the Gauri, men
Beneath the shadow of the big new dam
Relate a foolish legend of the flood,
Accounting for the little loss of life
(Only those five-and-twenty villagers)
In this wise: On the evening of the flood,
They heard the groaning of the rotten dam,
And voices of the Mountain Devils. Then
An incarnation of the local God,
Mounted upon a monster-neighing horse,
And flourishing a flail-like whip, came down,
Breathing ambrosia, to the villages;
And fell upon the simple villagers
With yells beyond the power of mortal throat
And blows beyond the power of mortal hand,
And smote them with the flail-like whip, and drove
Them clamorous with terror up the hill,
And scattered, with the monster-neighing steed,
Their crazy cottages about their ears;
And generally cleared those villages.
Then came the water, and the local God,
Breathing ambrosia, flourishing his whip,
And mounted on his monster-neighing steed,
Went down the valley with the flying trees

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And residue of homesteads, while they watched
Safe on the mountain-side these wondrous things,
And knew that they were much beloved of Heaven.

Wherefore, and when the dam was newly built,
They raised a temple to the local God,
And burnt all manner of unsavoury things
Upon his altar, and created priests;
And blew into a conch and banged a bell,
And told the story of the Gauri flood
With circumstance and much embroidery.

So he, the whiskified Objectionable,
Unclean, abominable, out-at-heels,
Became the tutelary Deity
Of all the Gauri valley villages—
And may in time become a Solar Myth!

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TWO MONTHS

JUNE

No hope, no change! The clouds have shut us in,
And through the cloud the sullen Sun strikes down
Full on the bosom of the tortured Town;
Till Night falls heavy as remembered sin
That will not suffer sleep or thought of ease,
And, hour on hour, the dry-eyed Moon in spite
Glares through the haze and mocks with watery light
The torment of the uncomplaining trees.

Far off, the Thunder bellows her despair
To echoing Earth thrice-parched. The lightnings fly
In vain. No help the heaped-up clouds afford,
But wearier weight of burdened, burning air.
What truce with Dawn? Look, from the aching sky
Day stalks, a tyrant with a flaming sword!

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TWO MONTHS

SEPTEMBER

AT dawn there was a murmur in the trees,
A ripple on the tank, and in the air
Presage of coming coolness—everywhere
A voice of prophecy upon the breeze.
Up leaped the Sun and smote the dust to gold,
And strove to parch anew the heedless land,
All impotently, as a King grown old
Wars for the Empire crumbling 'neath his hand.

One after one, the lotos-petals fell,
Beneath the onslaught of the rebel year
In mutiny against a furious sky;
And far-off Winter whispered: "It is well!
Hot Summer dies. Behold, your help is near,
For when men's need is sorest, then come I."

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L'ENVOI

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

THE smoke upon your Altar dies,
  The flowers decay;
The Goddess of your sacrifice
  Has flown away.
What profit, then, to sing or slay
The sacrifice from day to day?

"We know the Shrine is void," they said,
  "The Goddess flown;
Yet wreaths are on the altar laid—
  The Altar-Stone
Is black with fume of sacrifice,
Albeit She has fled our eyes.

"For, it may be, if still we sing
  And tend the Shrine,
Some Deity on wandering wing
  May there incline,
And, finding all in order meet,
Stay while we worship at Her feet."

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